IN THE SECRET PLACE

ALEXANDER SMELLIE

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IN THE SECRET PLACE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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IN THE SECRET PLACE

A Book of Daily Devotional Meditations

BY

ALEXANDER SMELLIE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF
"IN THE HOUR OF SILENCE" "SERVICE AND INSPIRATION"
ETC. ETC.

JANUARY TO JUNE

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1910

TO

J. P. STRUTHERS

IN TOKEN OF A DEBT I CANNOT PAY

PREFATORY NOTE

FOR Caroline Fox, when she was a girl in her Cornish home at Penjerrick, John Stuart Mill wrote out a Calendar of Odours. The brilliant colouring of nature, he said, is prolonged, with incessant changes, from March till October ; but the fragrance of nature's breath is spent before the summer is half ended. For a few months many scents fill the air by day, and many more by night ; then come the gentler perfumes of the autumn, which need to be sought for ere they can be found ; and then, before the wintry frosts have set in, all the aromas have fled. Mr. Mill's Calendar began with the common laurel in March. In April, it enumerated violets, furze, wallflower, the broad-leaved willow, the apple-blossom. For May, there were the lilac, the laburnum, the hawthorn, the sweet-brier. June brought an army of delightful essences and exhalations : the mignonette in the garden, the beans in the

field, the whole tribe of summer roses, the carnations and pinks. July was equally rich: now was the season of the acacia, the meadow-sweet, the honeysuckle, the myrtle, the lime. But with the lime the chronicler closed his incense-breathing catalogue. Later, he admitted, you have one stray odour, forgotten by its companions, which follows at a modest distance—the creeping clematis, which glorifies many a cottage wall. But the thread of continuity having been broken, he did not include this solitary straggler in the Calendar.

But there is no month in the circle of the year, nor any day in any month—not the dullest, nor the rainiest, nor the most biting and the most tempestuous—in which God's children and Christ's disciples may not inhale the fragrances of the heavenly country. These fill with sweet-smelling savour the chapters and verses of the Bible, and even its individual words. If, every morning from January to December, we will linger for some minutes in this field and garden of God, where, as Lord Bacon would say, "the breath of flowers comes and goes like the warbling of music," our souls, our faces, and our very garments will carry a Divine perfume during the whole of the day.

To summon us back to the joys of a Paradise, which we are in much danger of forgetting in

our busy and restless age, this book has been written; and its author only wishes that it were better fitted to accomplish a purpose so essential and desirable.

He is deeply grateful to two "elect ladies"—to his wife, who has drawn up the Index of Scripture Passages, and to the friend who, almost if not quite unsolicited, has sent him the twelve beautiful poems, which (to alter now the metaphor) adorn a homely dress as with the bells and pomegranates of the ancient priest.

November 1907.

IN THE SECRET PLACE

January.

I, named in the old time and place
From Janus of the double face,
Am January, and I stand
And gaze across the frozen land,
Betwixt the winter and the spring,
With frost for a burnt-offering.
I have two faces, and I look
With one face on the icy brook,
The arid sky, the world in chains;
Also I see the quickening rains,
And rivers singing to the sea:
I hear the first sap stir in the tree.

By me the firstling lambs are born;
The little spears of the baby corn
Ask "Is it time?" in the prison-house.
Below the bare and twisted boughs
The snowdrops green and white have birth.
I sound a trumpet o'er the earth.
"Awake, awake, ye dead!" I cry,
"And put your frozen dreaming by!"
I am a golden trumpeter
For February, mild of cheer—
Fair maid February,
With the green kirtle to her knee.

I have the celandine; I dream,
Clasping her gold head by a stream,
Of sweets that are not mine, nor fret
For daffodil or violet,
For boughs where apple-blossoms blow.
And roses I may never know,
For pinks, for poppies red as blood,
Or two little faces under a hood.
Mine are the first beginnings, I
Light the first fires to warm them by.
I know, like any mother mild,
The first wild fluttering of the child.

Mine are the beginnings ; in my hope
The bruised heart is lifted up.
I run, I run ; I leave behind
The old year's sorrows out of mind,
The long nights and the sunless days—
I, January, that have small praise.
In me the firstling thrush is heard,
Though every grass-blade's grown a sword ;
And the skates ring ; and round about
The water-fowl are frozen out.
Mine are beginnings. I would be
No month of them all but January.

KATHARINE TYNAN.

There are Three Foundations to be well and truly Laid.

Setting forward on my pilgrim march through the year, I remind my soul of three axiomatic truths on which God insists.

Without shedding of blood is no remission: *there is one. Now, my heart may forget the blood of Christ for different reasons. Perhaps because it is an ignorant heart. It has never taken time to consider God, in the claims of His law, in the righteousness of His character, in the glorious purity of His government: and it has never paused to study itself, in its native sinfulness, its wilful wandering, and the punishment which it deserves. Or perhaps because it is a proud heart. It thinks by its own persuasion, its own education, its own asceticism and self-denial, to procure fitness for God's favour and God's home. It will work or pray or fight its way to heaven. It will not be dependent for everything on the Cross of Jesus. Both from spiritual ignorance and from spiritual pride it is imperative that I seek deliverance. For apart from the one sufficient sacrifice of Calvary I am undone.*

Without faith it is impossible to please Him: *there is another of God's primary truths. And why is faith so indispensable? The question has various answers; let me select but one. Faith alone brings me into vital connection with the Saviour, Whose wealth and necessity I cannot adequately express or richly conceive. It is the door that leads me into the palaces of His riches. His merit, which is given to me who trust in Him, and then His peace, His guidance, His yoke and commandment, the strength and tenderness of His character, the glory of His heaven. Or it is the hand by which I lay personal hold on Christ, that He may pardon me the whole of my guilty past, and that afterwards, as I continue clinging to Him, He may conduct me to the sublimest levels. When I repose faith in Him, His grace passes into me, His spirit comes and abides with me, His beauty is radiated from me. Do I not begin to understand how essential is faith?*

Without holiness no man shall see the Lord: *there is the third requisite. They who stay with God, either here or hereafter, must sympathise with His aims, must share His likeness, and must be set on fire with His passion for truth and hatred*

of sin. Else, what community of interest can there be between Him and them? what fellowship of a friendly sort? So let me be certain that my sanctification deepens and increases with every day of the year. It will be a gradual process, a slow and patient ascent. But there will be no doubt of its ending, if I keep steadfast company with Christ. I have only to live habitually in His light, and the light will shine more and more. And one happy morning, in the nearer or farther future, I shall find myself—myself who am so unworthy and so unclean—perfect even as my Father in heaven is perfect.

January 1.

SAFE-CONDUCT.

"*Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world.*"—MATT. xxviii. 20 (R.V. marg.).

THE path in front of me may be full of flowers or full of thorns; or, as is more probable, flower and thorn may be mingled together. The sky may be light or dark. The weather may be bleakest winter or glorious summer. But I go safely and happily, if the Lord Christ, Who can and will supply my every want, is with me *all the days*.

Some of the days will be days of discipline, of the pruning knife and the cleansing fire. But when He is with me, the discipline is a benediction and not a curse. It teaches me to grasp His strong right hand with a tighter hold, to pray more earnestly, to find heights and depths of meaning in the promises of God, to feel for all who are in tribulation. Mind and heart and character are bettered by the endurance of affliction.

Often the days will be days of mercy. And if He is with me, I shall have the observant eye which reaps unfailing joy from the study of His goodnesses and deliverances. They will revive and deepen my gratitude, so that, after each fresh kindness, I shall sing *a new song*, realising that the customary forms and the usual hymns are insufficient to utter the emotions of my soul. I shall move through a land fertile and fair.

Many of the days, too, will be days of mono-

tony. They must be spent in little things—household labours, common anxieties, unnoticed toil. I may long for an experience more striking and romantic. But when He is with me, I know that He makes my life like His own: the blessed life He lived among carpenters' tools and village streets and peasant people. The drudgery is a love-message. It is Jesus Christ in disguise.

Almost every day will be a day of temptation. In the home, in the business, in company, in loneliness, I shall encounter the press of the storm. But let my Lord be with me, and temptation will but reveal the closeness and blessedness of the tie. It will give Him opportunity to gain numberless victories. It will be an instrument He uses to impart more maturity to my faith, more courage, more patience, more trust.

Perhaps one of the days will be the day of death. But if He does not leave or forsake me, death will be an ingredient in the training that fits me for the amaranthine inheritance. I must cross the River to reach the City; He did it Himself, and the disciple is not above the Master. His Everlasting Arms will sustain me in the flood, and, on the other side, I shall enter the Beautiful Gate and see His face.

All the days He is with me, to the end, and through the end, and beyond the end for ever and ever. Whether I live, therefore, or whether I die, I am His and He is mine.

January 2.

ON PILGRIMAGE.

"*And Enoch walked with God.*"—GEN. v. 24.

I COVET for myself a biography so short and so signal.

There is preparation for the exercise of walking. A man girds himself for it, shoes himself in prospect of it, sets out upon it with deliberateness and decision. He knows whither he is going and the purpose which he has in view. Thus let me begin my intercourse with my heavenly Lord, with calm resolution and foresight, counting the cost and doing nothing in thoughtlessness, "enamoured of unseen eternal grace." In the *Theologia Germanica* I read this wise sentence: "He who will give his whole diligence and might thereto, will verily come to know the true peace which is God Himself."

There is steadfastness in the exercise of walking. Often the road is long. Often it winds uphill. Sometimes it is through a wilderness of burning sand, sometimes over a dreary desert of relentless ice. Does it not need hardihood to persevere? Thus I must maintain my communion with God, though dangers threaten and enemies besiege. And if, as I foot it patiently along the highway, He gives me "no goodly gift, no pearl of price untold, no signet ring,"

> Yet once, yea twice, methinks His love will send
> A secret message,—"Bless'd unto the end
> Are they that love and they that still endure."

There is progress by the exercise of walking. The traveller leaves that which is behind, and reaches on towards that which is before. Each night finds him with difficulties surmounted and with conquests gained. He has new mercies to remember and a fresh psalm to sing. Thus it is with me, when God is Companion of my onward march. I go from strength to strength. My knowledge is enlarged. My character is deepened. My soul mounts to something still higher and broader, more satisfying and more spiritual. Grace takes the place of grace. To-day surpasses yesterday. I have successions of supply from Him Who is Himself unchanging and eternal.

Ah! and there is a goal to crown the exercise of walking. At last the city is reached. At last the wayfarer is home from morass and forest and steep hillside. And thus it will be at the close of my earthly walk with God. My weary feet shall stand within thy doors, O Jerusalem! and there my heart will have the life for which it pants—the perfect life kept for me in the treasuries of my Brother the King. As Christiana said in the ending of her pilgrimage, "However the weather is in my journey, I shall have time enough when I come there, to sit down and rest me"; and so she beckoned her farewell. Time enough, indeed! For the rest and the gladness and the worship and the growth will cease no more at all. My toils are brief-lived; my recompenses are ageless and everlasting.

January 3.

THE BEST OF BONDS.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant."—JER. xxxi. 31.

A SUN that never sets rises on me, when God makes with me His new and deathless league of amity.

The covenant is divine. In warp and woof, in inception and progress and perfecting, it is all of grace. God is its Author and its Finisher. It is born in His heaven and not on my earth. His supernatural power and love carry it out. It triumphs at length, because the Lord the Spirit is Artificer and Agent through and through. I read its terms, and I find that I have disappeared, and that Father and Son and Holy Ghost are paramount and supreme. *The days come that I, I, I*——. This magnificent "I": let me be nothing that It may be all. For what is there which It cannot do? Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption: It bestows them one by one, till I can ask no more.

The covenant is inward. On tables of stone the old law was inscribed. But the outside record, while it stands year after year as a witness to convict me of sin, cannot constrain me to obedience: there it is pitifully impotent. So now, instead of the Word graven with a pen of iron on a rock of adamant, God chooses a more persuasive mode of influencing me. *I will put My law in their inward parts,* He declares, *and write it in their hearts.* So be it

with me. I am conversant with His truth and mind, only when I enjoy the inner light. I grow in His grace and likeness, only when He governs me from the very centre and citadel of my nature.

And the covenant is simple. Men's religions are recondite and difficult. Even the old ritual of Israel, noble as it was, was too complicated and too minute for the crowd; and the people had to delegate its fulfilment to the priest. But what is God's promise for my later day?—*They shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.* Not that there is to be any dead level of attainment; but that the heart and essence of His Gospel may be grasped by the youngest and the lowliest. I am glad that, in the New Testament Church, the poor are the rich, and that every one may have his teaching and every one his revelation.

And the covenant is permanent. The forgiveness gained by the blood of bulls and goats was partial and shadowy; year by year pardon must be procured afresh. But now God brings me something more decisive and more undecaying. *I will remember their sin no more,* He says. "No more!"—there is the ring of finality, of enduringness, of eternity, in the emphatic word. And when I see the Cross of Christ on the Hill of Reproach, I am sure that the word is true. In Jesus, the mightiest assurances of God are not Yea and Nay, but only and everlastingly Yea.

These be the chains, my Lord, with which Thou bindest Thyself to me.

January 4.

MOST MERCIFUL BUT MOST RIGHTEOUS TOO.

"*Sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily.*"—ECCLES. viii. 11.

HOPE and dread mingle in this word, sunshine and gloom, as in many another word of Holy Writ.

It is a proof to me that love diadems and summarises the character of God. Of Calvinism Lord Morley declares that, while it "has proved itself a famous soil for rearing heroic natures," it "has been answerable for much anguish in many a human heart." My creed may be firm-set, impregnable, wholesome, bracing; and yet I may enunciate the truth in a repellent way. As if justice were the uppermost quality in God, and not grace. As if He did not hunger for the return of every prodigal son. As if He doomed me to destruction, apart from my own wilful unbelief. But no! He shrinks from proclaiming the verdict of death. In Him compassions flow. His mercies are infinite. His redemption has room for ten thousand worlds of sinful men. I shall wound Him as well as destroy myself, if I do not make my personal response to the overtures of His pitiful soul.

It is an encouragement to me to come home, although I have wandered far and the hour is late. Not yet has the sentence gone forth. Not yet is the awful sword made bare. Let my sins be innumerable as the sands, let them

be dark as a midnight without stars, let me be helpless in their grasp and tyranny, the Father waits to strip me of my rags and to clothe me in the best robe, the Saviour will in no wise cast me out, the Spirit is eager to create me anew. It is best when, in the early morning of my days, I taste and see that God is good; but if morning and noon are both long closed, and the shadows of the evening gather about me, the invitation still rings in my ears, the door is not shut, and the Lord's rich and ready welcome will greet me on the threshold.

Yes, but it is a warning to me that the judgment which falls at last falls with a crushing weight. God lingers and yearns and pleads, because He knows the fearfulness of the penalty. He is unwilling to deal the blow, for it is a final and fatal blow. He would not send me to the death beyond death, the sorrow which may not be uttered or fathomed. And what if His gracious delay should be near its termination? "I give you three weeks to consider," Admiral Coligny said to his brave wife, Charlotte de Laval, after he had spoken to her of the horrors of civil war. But she recalled the wrongs of the Huguenots, and replied, "The time is past already." My soul, thou hast loitered and procrastinated these many years, and what if God's time be past already? "My hand I raised to lift the latch, But lo, the gate was gone!"

Therefore let me be wise. Let me kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and I perish in the way. I would never forget the motto which John Ruskin suggested for a triangular shield, "To-day! To-day! To-day!"

January 5.

I FIND IT HARD TO BE A CHRISTIAN.

"No one shall snatch them out of My hand." — JOHN x. 28 (R.V.).

I HAVE need of an affirmation so positive, for how many the hostile forces are which would ensnare and wound and slay!

The storm beats down on fold and flock, the arrowy sleet and hail. Persecution has indeed changed its face with the lapse of the centuries. The bones of slaughtered Waldensian saints are not scattered to-day on Alpine mountains cold; the martyr fires are not kindled in Smithfield; the Duke of Lauderdale does not send the Hillmen to glorify God in the Grass-market. Yet I cannot, even in my more tolerant time, avoid persecution, if I am faithful to Jesus Christ. Unless I am guilty of cowardly compromise, ridicule, opposition, dislike will often be my portion.

The wolves are red in tooth and claw. *Ravening wolves:* it is how the New Testament, sternest as well as kindest of books, delineates the false prophets, plausible and misleading, who carry scathe and death among the sheep. How soon they entered and assailed the little flock! —Arians, who denied the Godhead of the Saviour; Gnostics, who obscured His Evangel by curious speculations of their own; Ebionites, who preached an unwise asceticism and poverty. Any teaching which turns me away from the simplicity of Christ, from the belief of His

truth and the practice of His commandments, does my soul most grievous harm.

The stranger tries to entice the sheep from the true Shepherd's side. In the society through which I move, I think the stranger's name is Worldliness. He allures me with the glitter of silver and gold. He invites me to pleasures and joys which weaken my attachment for my Lord. He persuades me to prefer other possessions and prizes before Him Who should be my First and my Last. And as I hearken to the beguiling voice, that one Face, which ought to be my universe, decomposes and vanishes into indistinctness and distance.

The sheep themselves may be their own worst enemies. The foes outside could not harm, if the heart I carry within were vigilant and valiant and full of prayer. But I am so fickle; so ready to mistake the adversary for a friend; so easily coaxed into Bypath Meadow; so free to choose, and so apt to choose foolishly and wrongfully. I plunge myself into a hundred dangers.

> I know my soul hath power to know all things,
> Yet she is blind and ignorant in all:
> I know I'm one of nature's little kings,
> Yet to the least and vilest things am thrall.

But, blessed be God! this is what Jesus says: *No one*, no antagonist, no temptation, no sin, *shall snatch them out of My hand*. Is it not a hand in which omnipotence resides, which is governed by a wisdom that cannot err, which pulses with a love undecaying and immortal?

January 6.

GLASS AND FIRE.

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory . . . stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."—REV. xv. 2.

HEAVEN is peace. Its sea is *a sea of glass.* And what an ocean that will be—transparent, still, never a storm to agitate its waves, never a ripple. It is wholly different from the waters with which I am acquainted now. Often the winds make them surge and swell, and in their quietest moods they are not entirely tranquil. *The troubled sea which cannot rest:* it is the Bible phrase, and the true one. But by and by God's children will stand, rank on rank, man by man, on a glassy sea, unruffled by a breeze, unflecked by the curling foam. It is the assurance that one day the storms will be ended, the battles will be fought, the pains will be past, the sorrows will be finished. May my feet be planted on those calm clear surfaces. May my home be within God's Palace Peaceable as well as within God's House Beautiful.

But Heaven is recollection also. Those who dwell in it have not forgotten the conflicts and agonies of the former time. The sea of glass is *mingled with fire.* Under the smooth, translucent, passionless crystal they can descry hot and leaping flames—flames that are quick and searching, that test and try everything, that burn what is bad and render purer what is good, that are not idle for a moment. If the

citizens of Jerusalem are at rest now, once they were in the midst of struggle; these are they which came out of great tribulation. Torrid heats and Arctic colds have fashioned them into what they are, and have made them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Shall I recall the fires when I stand on the sea of glass? Shall I thank God then for furnace and crucible and discipline?

And Heaven is praise. Its sons and daughters hold in their hands *the harps of God.* When I enter the blessed land, if by unmerited grace its gate is opened to me, I shall have a psalm, a hymn, a spiritual song, to which the angels themselves are strangers. They have never been saved, because they have never sinned. Not for them was the blood of the unblemished Lamb shed, and the Cross of shame and redemption raised, and the strong arm of the Lord stretched down. They have not been helped against the onset of the hurricane and the entrenchments of the enemy, nor guided through a thousand bewilderments, nor made more than conquerors in spite of countless feeblenesses and falls. There I have the better of the angels. Mine is the larger conception of God's grace, mine the deeper debt. And so "I'll bless the Heart that planned."

Through Jesus Christ, Door and Way, may I come to the goodly home. When all my confidence is given to Him, He prepares it for me, and me for it. I yield my soul to Him, and He lifts me to the golden doors, and I behold "a light upon the shining sea."

January 7.

THE SEELENFÜHRER.

"*He that is wise winneth souls.*"—Prov. xi. 30 (R.V.).

NOT every one is fitted for the enterprise of winning souls, and God is particular in the choice of His instruments. The work is blessed, but it is delicate and difficult; and he who engages in it requires a special qualification.

He must be a disciple. I cannot gain recruits for science, unless its fairy tales have enchanted my own mind; or for history, unless I have followed its turnings and windings through the centuries; or for poetry, unless I am fascinated by its melody and music; and it is useless trying to gain recruits for Christ, till Christ is personally my Chiefest and my Best. My sin, my death, my hopelessness, His forgiveness, His redemption, His glory: the vital meaning of these the Gospel and the Holy Ghost must teach to myself. There can be no true soul-winner who is not a pupil at the feet of Jesus.

And he must be an enthusiast. This is not a task which the perfunctory and the lethargic can perform. Those are not victories achieved by the man who is prompted only by a cold sense of duty. On the altar of the heart the fire must blaze at white heat. "With a rush the intolerable craving must shiver throughout me like a trumpet-call." The thought of the depths to which souls may fall and of the heights to which they may rise, the conviction of the responsibility laid on me to benefit them,

the summons of One Who deserves a thousand times more than I can repay Him—these motives are to give hands and feet and wings to my endeavour.

And he must be a brother. "I used to judge the worth of a person," writes George Gissing, "by his intellectual power and attainment. I could see no good where there was no logic, no charm where there was no learning. Now I think that one has to distinguish between two forms of intelligence, that of the brain and that of the heart, and I have come to regard the second as by far the more important." Indeed, I must give my heart to the sinfullest soul, the most pithless and the most provoking, if I am to entice it home to God. I must love it, as God has loved me, out and up from the pit of its corruption.

And then, also, he must be a believer. To the very end I will need to crucify myself, and to lean absolutely on Him Whose I am and Whom I serve. There will be an abundance of prayer, of preparation, of ingenuity, of patience, of toil. But behind all these activities of mine, there will be the complete commitment of each case to that Lord Who alone holds the key of human lives, and Whose love for souls transcends my love as the sevenfold radiance of the sun outshines the candle with its flickering flame. To the last I must remain the humblest of believers in Him.

This is the wisdom which conquers obstinate men. This be the wisdom with which I am invested by God's grace.

January 8.

HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE CONCERNED IN MY HEALING.

"*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will.*" HEB. xiii. 20, 21.

MY redemption has its divine origins. Very fully the writer of the Epistle expounds the truth that there is care in heaven and there is love. The sheep have a great Shepherd, he says; and he names His peerless name. He is none other than *our Lord Jesus*, Who sought me over moor and fen and crag and torrent, and through the Valley of the Shadow of Death—sought till at length He found. Moreover, the sheep are guarded by a matchless covenant. It is *everlasting*, so that through the ages that have no conclusion my security will never be imperilled nor my salvation become effete. And it has been ratified by *blood*, the blood of God's Lamb without blemish or spot. The sheep are reassured, too, by the mightiest miracle, that of the resurrection. Has not God *brought again from the dead* my Lord Jesus? Has He not approved before the universe my Redeemer's obedience and sacrifice? Thus I climb to the ultimate and crowning thought. The God of the sheep is no hard taskmaster, but *the God of peace*. I misconceive Him if I magnify His majesty and His purity at the expense of His mercy. He stands and calls

to me with longing look and pleading voice. Fury is not in Him.

But my redemption has also its human applications. The verse passes into a prayer that I may learn from my own experience what the grace of the Lord is and does. And now I make the acquaintance of another Divine Person—the Holy Spirit, Paraclete, Teacher, Sanctifier, Friend. He tells me of a new ownership. *To do His will:* He so inclines and persuades me that I choose this for my passion, my goal, my life; I respond to God's masterhood and government. And He fosters in me a new diligence. *In every good work* I am anxious to please my Master, until there is no profane and secular territory in me or about me, over which the flag of Christ does not fly. And He brings me to a new standard. To be *perfect*—there is my entreaty and my ideal. No slight Christianity satisfies my God, and none such can satisfy my soul if I am controlled by the Holy Ghost. I will covet the stainlessness and the holiness of Jesus. I will live near to Him, considering His person and character and will, until His law leads me in perpetual captivity, until His yoke is sweet and light, until I am changed into the same image.

If my redemption is sure as heaven, it must permeate my nature and history through and through. If with one hand it reaches to the Throne of the Eternal, with the other it controls all my being.

January 9.

ELDAD AND MEDAD MAY DO THE WORK OF MOSES.

"Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets."—Num. xi. 29.

THE task and the privilege of commending the Gospel of God are not restricted to the preacher in the pulpit, and the ordained office-bearer of the church, and the evangelist whose appeal moves a vast assembly. I recall the unauthorised workers of the Bible. They are a goodly fellowship—Eldad and Medad, who prophesied in the camp; and that exorcist whom John forbade but Christ approved; and the men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who carried the story of Jesus to Antioch; and Lois and Eunice; and the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord. Why should not I stand in the dedicated ranks?

Prayer will enrol me among the prophets. It is more necessary that I should talk with God about those whom I desire to see led into His household than that I should talk with themselves. I rush sometimes to my share in the undertaking, when I would accomplish mightier things if I tarried longer in the secret place with Him. He comprehends every avenue of approach to the spirit I am eager to have touched and impressed and vanquished. He can prevent me from making mistakes that are incalculably harmful. He alone will guide me to the fitting method, the winsome temper, the overcoming word. Perhaps the

lesson of clinging, persevering, definite, invincible prayer is the special lesson I must learn.

Gracious speech will lift me to the lofty levels where the prophets live. Religious conversation, in which one man opens his very soul to another, pleading with him in the name of the Saviour: I cannot estimate its perfume and its power. It is easy to escape the edge of a sermon, and easy to apply its truths and admonitions and yearning persuasions to one's neighbour. But there is no escaping the edge of such solitary communion with a messenger of the King. There is no possibility of applying it to anybody save oneself. This was the plan of the Lord with Nicodemus, with the woman of Samaria, and with many another. May God enable me to employ it unaffectedly, tenderly, out of a full heart.

A holy life will equip me for fulfilling the sublime mission of the prophets. Fathers and mothers may rise from family prayer, to speak angrily to the children; they counteract the heavenly influence of the season of worship. A Christian leaves the devotions of the Sabbath, to show himself inconsiderate and ungenerous in the business of the week: he alienates men from sanctity and from Jesus. If I am to draw others to God, I dare not permit one blot on my escutcheon or one questionable practice in my behaviour. I needs must love the Highest, morning and noon and night. My conduct will travel as far as my words. By the grace of the Almighty Spirit, it must be beautiful, eloquent, Christlike conduct.

And thus I, too, shall prophesy.

January 10.

UP! MY DROWSING EYES.

"*He findeth them asleep.*"—MATT. xxvi. 40.

THERE was a strange lack of obedience here; for Christ had distinctly bidden His disciples *tarry and watch*; and He never imposes an unnecessary duty, or gives a harsh command. There was a strange lack of tenderness; they were leaving Him alone in His anguish, and, if in a large degree He must tread the winepress solitary and companionless, they might at least have made Him aware of their sympathy; they could have wept beside Him and prayed for Him. There was a strange lack of seriousness; it was a crisis in their own lives, it was the hour and power of darkness, "the terrible kings were on them with spears that are deadly bright"; and they were regardless of their peril. There was a strange and culpable lack of expectancy; Gethsemane should have been a school for all the future, the memory of the bloody sweat deterring them from sin, the recollection of the cup drained to its dregs teaching them to suffer and be strong; but what can scholars learn whose eyes are heavy and slumbrous?

Disciples who sleep—I wonder whether I am not among them. The indulgence of hidden sin benumbs the heart, and steals buoyancy and joyousness from the life. Hurry and fitfulness in secret devotion soon drain my virtue out of me. An excess of attention to the world, in its work or its gain or its

literature or its amusement, seldom conduces to the health and wakefulness of the spirit. Security and satisfaction, like those of Peter and his fellows, invariably loosen my grasp of the Son of God, and are infallible preludes of disaster and shame. So the sunrise glow vanishes, and conscience is no longer sensitive, and the Master's will becomes a bondage and a tax, and the sight of Him in the Garden and on the bitter Cross does not conquer and constrain and captivate as it used to do.

It is guilty to sleep. That those whom God the Spirit has awakened, and the blood of Jesus has redeemed, should succumb again to sloth: what a crime that is! It is impoverishing to sleep. I deprive myself of progress and enlightenment, of much of my influence here and some of my glory hereafter, when I am content with a stagnant life. It is hazardous to sleep. While the citizens drowsed, "a midnight host of spectres pale" beleaguered Prague; and they disappeared only when the cathedral bell sounded the call to prayer. Then, but not before then,

> Down the broad valley, fast and far,
> The troubled army fled;
> Up rose the glorious morning star,
> The ghastly host was dead.

The bells of my Master's need and my Master's love enjoin me to watch and pray. And it is high time that my heart awoke.

January 11.

YOUR SLUMBER SADDENS CHRIST.

"*And He saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with Me one hour?*"—MATT. xxvi. 40.

EVERY word is incisive: every syllable is an arrow whose point has been dipped in wistful and wounded love.

The sleep is inexcusable, because of the indebtedness of the disciple. *Could ye not watch?* asks Christ; and the Ye is emphatic. Ye, who have heard My teaching, witnessed My miracles, and known the allurement of My life; ye, whom I have crowned with My special favour; ye, who have protested your fidelity so often and so recently. I am the "drowned dyvour" of my Lord Jesus Christ, to quote Samuel Rutherfurd's vivid phrase. Such things He has done for me: such boons He has bestowed; such pains He has undergone. And shall I be negligent towards Him? Ah, the thanklessness of it, the ugliness, the evil!

And the sleep is inexcusable, because of the modesty of the Lord's demand. *Could ye not watch?* He queries; and now let me lay the stress on the verb. He might have bidden me drink with Him the wormwood and the gall; climb the hill of shame by His side; die, as He died, of a broken heart. But the Cross and the curse are for Himself alone; and from me He seeks simply the open eye and the consecrated mind and the obedient spirit. Not to exile or prison or martyrdom does He call

me, but to suspect myself, to repel the advance of temptation, to cultivate holiness, and to embrace the opportunity of commending Him. It seems unpardonable that Christ's friend should deny Him a gift so small.

And the sleep is inexcusable, because of the measurelessness of the Saviour's deserts. *Could ye not watch with Me?* — and what poignancy and pathos dwell in the last words! He is my Healer, my Teacher, my King, my God. The earth moves at His command. The beasts are governed by His sceptre, and the birds sing His praise. High in the ranks of creation, the angels are flames of fire in the speed, and stormy winds in the energy, with which they do His will. But He blesses me as He has blessed none of them. They do not know my motive to spend and be spent for Him. To succour me He became man. To fill me with good He emptied Himself, and was numbered with transgressors. Shall I forget Him?

And the sleep is inexcusable, because of the brevity of the vigilance. *Could ye not watch with Me one hour?*—and how quickly one hour runs out to its final second! Many a night, from sunset to sunrise, He spent pleading for me, the morning star finding Him where the evening star had left Him. He devoted a whole eternity, ageless and endless, to the devising of my salvation; and shall I grudge Him my fast-fleeting days? His grace towards me has neither commencement nor close; and how can I rob Him of those few fragments of time which remain to me? Nay, this very moment let me arise.

January 12.

THE MOTHER HEART OF GOD.

"Blessed be the Lord Who daily beareth our burden, even the God Who is our salvation."—Ps. lxviii. 19 (R.V.).

IT is good to have the older translation; but is not this rendering better still? For I am never free from frailty and trial. Bewildered, I need the Shepherd's care. Helpless, I need the Mother's heart.

The Burden-bearer is divine. He is *the Lord*—that Lord before Whom Sinai shook, by Whom kings and armies were scattered, Whose chariots are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. I think sometimes of God as too high, or too unruffled and calm, or too stainless and holy, to stoop to me. I insist on His dignity and sublimity and separateness. Probably I suppose that I am honouring Him. But in reality I do Him grievous wrong, and rob Him of His most adorable attributes. This ancient Psalmist can assure me that God is a Person and a Father, Who enters into close and vital union with men. And to my heart His sympathy should be a hundredfold more indubitable, since Christ has come—Christ, "more compassionate than woman, lordly more than man." *Himself bare our sicknesses.*

The Burden-bearer is tireless. *Daily* He is busy at His gracious work. In wintry days of snow, and spring days of promise, and summer days of heat, and autumn days of reaping, He never rests, never wearies, never forgets. There are the critical and exceptional days, which

confront me with a tremendous emergency; there are the common days, which seem so hackneyed and trivial and trite; and for both He is abundantly sufficient. If every morning brings with it a new responsibility and load, every morning my Lord is ready to breathe His strength into me, and to send me on my way with a merry heart. *He that keeps Israel, He slumbers not nor sleeps.* Always He is with me. Always He is eager to arm me against fretfulness and complaint and inconsistency. Always He waits to make me a lamp which burns and shines.

The Burden-bearer is saving. He is *the God Who is our salvation.* If I am a Christian, He carries my distress, that I may know His grace better than ever, and sing the new song with more understanding and zest. If I am a stranger to Him, He sustains and comforts me, that He may draw me to penitence and faith. In the year 1896, some English explorers picked out of the sands of the Libyan desert, where the city of Oxyrhynchus flourished once, a torn and discoloured leaf, the fragment of a papyrus book. On the faded leaf they read: "Jesus saith, I stood in the midst of the world, and I found all men drunken, and none found I athirst." But when God in Christ stands before me, stretching out tired and untired arms to receive my trouble, may I thirst for His salvation, and accept it, and rejoice in it.

Yes, let me praise Him for His beating heart. It is His love that He loads me daily with His benefits. It is His tenderer and richer love that He daily bears my burden.

January 13.

FROM ROBE AND CROWN THE KING STEPPED DOWN.

"*He became poor.*"—2 Cor. viii. 9.

He became poor: the words, brief and homely and inexhaustible, give illumination to the mind, no less than impulse and joy to the soul.

For example, I may use them as a clue to the nature of God. Agnosticism asserts that, if God lives at all, He is curtained in mystery not to be pierced. Materialism makes Him pitiless and rigid, an iron law, an inexorable force. Pantheism robs Him of personality and affection and will, and merges Him in the world of men and things. But here is the refuge from these confusing winds of doctrine. Here is a God wrapped in no nebulous uncertainties and clouds; a God far removed from merciless fate and capricious chance; a God with an ear open to hear my cry, a heart prepared to bear my sorrow, a hand strong to deliver me.

Or I may use the words as a criterion of the evil of sin. In my world and time, it is common to excuse sin. There is a cheery optimism, which discovers nothing, east or west, to hurt and annoy. There is a twentieth-century paganism, which extols the Greek sweetness and light above the Hebrew and Christian righteousness. There is a reaction, too, from the sternness and severity of former teaching. Ah! but if the Lord of all *became poor* that He might atone for my sin—if such abnegations

and agonies were needed ere the Son of God could prevail—how bitter and how wicked sin must be!

Or I may use the words as a gauge of the cost of redemption. Deeper and deeper Christ descended. He stooped to the manger-cradle of His Incarnation; He was born of a woman and made under the law. But this was merely the starting-point. To the wonder of His birth I must add the wonder of His life, in its vicarious obedience, when He kept without a breach and without a stumble the precepts of God which I had discarded. And the sorrow's crown of sorrow was yet to come. He died for me. He bore my curse. I must go to Golgotha, when darkness broods over the heart of Jesus, and when He is forced to cry, *My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* if I would estimate His poverty aright. Such an infinite ransom-price Love paid.

And I may use the words as a parable of the essence of conversion. For, though His impoverishment has an unapproachable character, I am to be changed into His image and to be clothed in His humility. He stands alone; yet I must be conformed to Him. Salvation is not the observance of rite and ordinance, nor the carving out of my own path to God's goodwill, nor the cultivation of certain feelings and moods. It is to take the lowest room. It is to depend on God, my Healer, for pardon, for life, for everything. Thou self-forgetting Christ! teach me too to become poor.

To the last of life I ought to be a pupil in the school of the Lord's poverty.

January 14.

THE GREAT ARRAIGNMENT.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."—Isa. i. 16.

HERE is God's readiness in approaching men. The Judge leans forward from the bench. It seems as if He would rise, and advance to the prisoner, with the light of pity and love in His eyes. And His word is *Come!* It might well have been *Go!*—"Go to the misery you have earned, the separation from My fellowship you have brought on yourself, the blackness of despair." Why does He say "Come"? Why is He anxious, not to expel me, but to woo and win me to Himself? It is not because He condones my wrong-doing, and relaxes His own moral demands. It is simply because, in salvation, He always takes the initiative. He is first, and I am merely second. He leads the way, and I follow on. "Tossed by every wind," said Augustine, "I was steered by Thee." How He longs for me, the Judge with the pitiful soul!

Here, too, is God's reasonableness in treating with men. He honours the intelligence He has given me. He does not bless me by some inexplicable magic, or without my willing consent, or against the dictates of my judgment. He calls me to a conference with Himself. *Let us reason together*, He says. For my salvation is not a thing of ignorance, to be gone about in the dark; nor a thing of impulse, to

be embraced without costing the cost; nor a thing of emotion only, demanding much excitement and sore distress and rapturous ecstasy. My assent to my Lord's appeal is to be given with calm and convinced faith. A man who is determined to seek and find will close with Christ, wrote William Guthrie of Fenwick, "not in some fit and gust of passion, but as it were in his cold blood." So let me ponder the matter in all its aspects, and, having cast myself on the Saviour's sufficiency, let me say, like him whom no enemies could keep outside the palace of the King, "Set down myname, Sir."

Best of all, here is God's mercifulness in saving men. The Judge prevails on me to listen, to study seriously the things which belong to my peace, and to yield to His mode of blessing me. And then what wealth of grace lies in His next word!—*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.* To change red into white: it is a marvellous task. The red, Delitzsch says, is the hue of life, but of life passionate and self-seeking and hurtful to myself and to many around me. The white is the crystalline and perfect radiance in which there is no alloy and nothing to harm. It is a miracle which transmutes the one into the other. But God does it, by Christ's Cross, and by the agency of the Holy Ghost. And O! I trust that He has done it for me.

Thus He accomplishes the impossible. Only let me *come now*; for, as the dial in Abbotsford tells me, *Mox nox*: Presently it will be night.

January 15.

THOU DOST WEAR THE GODHEAD'S MOST BENIGNANT GRACE.

"So David checked his men, and suffered them not to rise against Saul."—1 SAM. xxiv. 7 (R.V.).

NO doubt it came easier to David to pardon and spare on the second occasion, because already he had pardoned and spared. It is the first step in right feeling and right doing which costs; the subsequent steps lose their arduousness and pain. What is difficult duty at the commencement is sublimed into glad delight ere the close; and I sing of that which once summoned the bitter tears to my eyes—"Flowers laugh before thee on their beds, and fragrance in thy footing treads."

Let me take, for instance, this heavy task of loving my enemies. Heavy indeed it seems to my natural heart, utterly repugnant, a sign of pusillanimity and cowardice. Even after heavenly grace has been planted within me, but still is young and crude and green, it appears akin to impossibility. But, as the grace ripens, as I set Christ before me every day, and as I persevere in practising John Eliot's three imperatives, "Bear! Forbear! Forgive!"—sweet love and charity are woven into the very fibre of my being. I hate to harbour a grudge. Goodwill and peace lead me in their golden chains. I have a deep satisfaction, an inexpressible joy, in blessing him who loads me with curses, and in praying for him who persecutes

me. I cannot rest till the foe is changed into a friend.

Or let me take the high emprise of secret prayer. It is no child's play. It demands vigilance and energy. I must drive every distraction away. I must consider well what I should ask. I must invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit. I must survey steadfastly the greatness, the purity, the truth, the mercy of the God to whom I come. "Dear Christian reader," Jacob Böhme said, "to pray aright is right earnest work." But I haunt my Lord's audience-chamber, I tarry with Him in continuous communion; and, ere long, I would not miss the intercourse for any prize the world can give. Its laboriousness and pain have disappeared. It possesses *meram quandam dulcedinem*, a certain undiluted bliss.

Or let me take the holy life. It is hard to crucify a besetting sin. It is hard to set my soul with resolution to divinely appointed service which is distasteful to me. It is hard to keep the girded loin and the lighted lamp. For the construction of the bronze gates of the Baptistry of San Giovanni in Florence, the sculptor Ghiberti trained his brain and hand "with infinite diligence." He toiled over every leaf and spray. He spent forty-nine years in the undertaking. But when the gates were complete, Michael Angelo declared them worthy to be the gates of Paradise. By Christ's grace, I hold on my way; and, at length, holiness and happiness are synonymous in my vocabulary.

January 16.

IN THE THICK DARKNESS GOD IS.

"*Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.*"—MATT. xxvii. 45.

WITH bowed head and an adoring heart I draw near to the darkness where God resides—the darkness not of Sinai, but of the hill of Christ's reproach and my salvation. I think of the unspeakable mystery of the Cross.

On Calvary I am within the clouds of God's eternal purpose. The beginning of His grace in Jesus Christ is beyond my ken. "He loved me from the first of time," before the foundations of the earth were laid. How can I comprehend it, this everlastingness of redemption? Yet it should be my joy to ponder it; for the shadow of God's agelong purpose is a beneficent shadow. If He has cared for me from an unreckoned past, I may count with assurance on His remembering me through an unreckoned and unreckonable future.

But on Calvary, too, I am within the clouds of God's immeasurable sorrow. There are secrets of anguish here, with which I dare not meddle. There is a midnight blackness, as well as a noonday light, before which the angels must veil their faces with their wings. "God forsaken by God!" Luther exclaimed, as if awaking from a reverie, "who can understand it?" I tread softly; the place is holy ground. Yes, but happy ground, if mine is a believing heart. My Saviour was derelict, that I might

be a child within the home, and might go no more out.

On Calvary, moreover, I am within the clouds of God's ineffable wisdom. The Cross of Jesus has been the central theme in the study of the profoundest Christian teachers, and none of them has exhausted the theme. It is God's most wondrous device, God's last word. I can never explain it fully. But this I perceive, that it glorifies both the inflexible holiness of my Judge and the yearning love of my Father. This I am sure of, that it gives me a disclosure of His many-sided perfections such as I cannot gain anywhere else.

And on Calvary I am within the clouds of God's strange and potent discipline. Shrouded in the darkness, Christ gained new beauty, new worth, new dominion. It was now that His glory shone most brightly forth, now that He was invested with the attraction which draws me to Him. His defeat was His victory. His night was His high noon. And I, when I am under the cloud and in the sea, when I am baptized in my lesser measure with my Redeemer's baptism—shall I despair? "The shadow of His Cross is better than the sun."

May the thick darkness be an ever-opening secret between Him and me. Out of the shadows may the beams of hope and love pour into my soul. Jesus delivered for my offences —may He be all my salvation and all my desire. And may the mystery of mysteries be the benediction of benedictions.

January 17.

THEOPHORUS.

"*Be filled with the Spirit.*"—Eph. v. 18.

IF I am *filled with the Spirit*, I shall crave nothing better and nothing more. Then I reach the land of flowers and fruits, corn and wine. But it is the wine of the heavenly country, the wine of God, in which there is neither sting nor poison nor disillusionment.

Does my life seem monotonous? The wish rises instinctively at times that it had more colour in it, more poetry, more music, more exuberance and ecstasy of joy. What I must do is to ask and to receive the Holy Ghost. He conducts men and women from gladness on to larger and richer gladness—pardon first, and, by and by, illumination, and purity, and full assurance of hope and faith. This is no weary and dusty highway along which I plod with reluctant and dragging feet. This is "a garden full of shelter and of fountains," a Paradise opening perpetually into fresh and novel experiences of delight.

Does my life seem lonely? I may be called to leave behind me the dear companionships of my home; or, while I tarry in the midst of my friends, I may be weighted by some incommunicable burden of the soul. But I do not love isolation, and I long for the comradeship of kindred hearts. It will deliver me from my solitariness if I welcome the Spirit of God. He introduces me to the great family

and brotherhood of the saints, on earth and in heaven. I listen to their voices. I read their books. I am hallowed and revived by their example. My narrow stream has passed into the mighty sea, and I have a wide horizon.

Does my life seem useless? I feel as if I were working no deliverance on the earth. My place might be emptied, I think, and none would be the worse for my absence. What influence have I? what magnetism over others? what skill to extend the kingdom of Christ? Then let me commit my being to the vivifying and empowering virtue of God the Spirit. He will fashion me into an instrument fitted to render real service to my Lord and my fellows. He will guide me to my work, and direct me in performing it, and crown it soon or late with His blessing which maketh rich.

This is the panacea for all my disabilities and woes. This is the Elixir of Life. An officer in the Crimea, who received a gun-shot wound at Inkermann, told a friend afterwards that a little lark, living close to the trenches, rose every day into the air, through all that tremendous time, singing unhurt amidst shot and shell. It is a parable of what happens when I am *filled with the Spirit*. The shadows and the sorrows fall apart, and all my windows are opened to the day. Morning by morning, and hour by hour, I yield myself to the Holy Ghost; and my name, like that of Ignatius in the early years, becomes Theophorus, the man who carries the riches of God within himself.

January 18.

THE HARVESTS OF INTERCESSION.

"*And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.*"—JOB xlii. 10.

JOB heaps coals of fire on the heads of his unfriendly friends. He prays for those who have despitefully used him. Nothing is finer in the New Testament itself. Long before Christ's time, here is a man endowed with the mind of Christ. May I, for whom the morning dawn has given place to "the full midday beam," copy and reproduce the ancient saint's generosity and grace.

Why should I plead for other men? There are many cogent reasons.

These are prayers which remind me of forgotten truth. I often emphasise the reflex influence which prayer exerts over myself; and certainly it is right that I should do so. But the benefits of supplication do not stop, when it has calmed and sobered and hallowed me. God sends actual, unmistakable, positive answers to my cries. And I know it, when I beg blessing for a personality outside of mine.

And these are prayers which rescue me from selfishness. At the Throne I am apt to be too much concerned with myself, my symptoms, my ailments, my necessities. Intercession cures me of my exclusiveness. It sets me face to face with my brothers and sisters: "our fears, our hopes, our aims are one." It preaches to me my kinship with all the children in the great family of faith.

These comprehensive prayers enrol me, too, among the servants and helpers of the Kingdom. I am sorry sometimes that I have little opportunity for attempting and accomplishing much. But this is how those who tarry at home divide the spoil. I intercede for the toilers and fighters in the high places of the field, and new powers descend on them, and I have my share in their triumphs.

And these large-hearted prayers cement my union with my risen Lord. He *ever liveth to make intercession*; and I am called on earth to a ministry similar to that which He fulfils in heaven. I "rose upon His rising day," rose into the privileges and possibilities of a history moulded after His own. Never am I nearer Jesus, than when I abound in entreaties for all needy men.

There is yet more. These prayers come back in benediction upon myself. Job's captivity was turned, he passed out of winter into spring, when he besought the grace of God for his friends. If I occupy myself intelligently and ardently with the prosperity of some one else, I understand better my own wants and my fountains of supply. My waning torch leaps again into flame, and once more I sing as in the days of my youth.

He reaps golden sheaves who devotes himself to intercessory prayer. Let me cultivate the blessed habit, and my history will put on a royaller dress and wield a more prevailing sceptre. My powers will be multiplied inconceivably.

January 19.

FOR WHOM SHALL I LIFT HANDS OF PRAYER?

"I exhort that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men."—1 Tim. ii. 1 (R.V.).

FOR children and friends let me plead without ceasing. In the home and in the school God has entrusted young hearts and lives to my care. I am to give them my thought, my activity, my affection. Best of all, I am to give them my prayers; saying, with Catherine Booth, "I will not have a wicked child," and wrestling with the Father till they are His. And how can I repay my friend's love and help better than by asking for him, as St. Paul asked for Onesiphorus, that he may find the mercy of the Lord?

But, no less, let me recompense bitterness with blessing, and entreat the divine favour for those who have been untender to me. Jesus is my Pattern, seeking pardon and peace for the men who drove the nails into His hands and feet. Such desires will engender relenting, kindness, graciousness. They will send the black and noxious thoughts out of the house of my soul, and will brighten the chamber and sweeten the air. They will raise me nearer to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

And for the church let me abound in prayer. I complain of the church's listlessness, conformity to the world, failure to defend the truth, dislike of confession and toil and sacri-

fice. But am I altogether faultless? If I had interceded more for the preacher, the probability is that he would have been dowered with a clearer vision of eternal things. If I had remembered before the Throne the Christian society, its members would have been less lethargic, and would have unfurled bravely the standard of their King.

For the land let me plead. The country of my birth, which has had such a moving and memorable history: it is easy for me to see its blemishes and stains; they are palpable, often they are repulsive, they are fraught with infinite danger to the commonwealth. But I act wisely and patriotically, when I lay hold on the strength of God, and beseech Him to make us a people valiant for Christ. This is the mental fight, which "builds Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land."

And for the wide world let me lift my voice and cry. When I kneel before the august and merciful Presence of my Lord, I can travel far abroad—to India, to China, to Africa, to the islands of the Pacific; I can have glimpses of the mission-stations, and the missionaries, and the converts; I can recall their difficulties and perils; I can picture the vast tracts of heathenism and the perishing millions. So I shall do something to hasten the day when the knowledge of God will cover the earth.

He prayeth best who loveth best all things—all things—both great and small. I ought to set no boundaries to my intercessions.

January 20.

WE HAPPY FEW, WE BAND OF BROTHERS.

"*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar! we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.*"—DAN. iii. 16.

WHAT were the inspiriting motives which swayed them? what the watchwords which they heard pealing in the inner ear?

They obeyed the voice of Duty. There was a spiritual law which ruled their being more masterfully than the law of Babylon. In childhood they learned its precepts far away in their Judæan homes. It said, *Thou shalt not bow down to any graven image.* That was enough for them. Duty had called. God had spoken. They might give their bodies to be burned; but they must not sin. And I—am I as ready always to comply with the highest law? I need the infusion of some Stoicism into my Christianity; it is too invertebrate and molluscous. I must learn to love Duty and Christ in their winter as in their summer moods.

They knew the power of Faith. To them God's government of men and things was surefooted, leaving nothing to chance and fortune, moving invariably to the noblest ends. He might slay them; but neither death nor life would lessen their assurance that they were safe in His keeping. And is my faith of the same conquering sort? I ought not to be afraid for any evil. "Where

will you take refuge when Church and Empire unite against you?" the Cardinal asked the Reformer. And the Reformer replied, "Under the heavens of God." Under the heavens of God, a tempest cannot blow; and I, His child, am secure.

They welcomed the opportunity of Sacrifice. Here was a sudden and tragic end to their upward progress in the State, their friendships, their plans. They felt its anguish. But when it was a question of glorifying God, they did not hesitate; loss in His service was truest gain. Many a time I talk about carrying a cross; but does it get beyond talk into positive experience? There is danger in high-sounding and resonant phrases; they may be a narcotic to my mind, a drug to my conscience, creating a baseless self-satisfaction. The cross in my creed, let me never forget, is worthless without the cross in my conduct.

They saw the necessity of Testimony. They had no patience with any subterfuge. They were determined to be utterly frank. They must protest. They must stand alone, like Athanasius against the world. They must vindicate the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Perhaps I am a disciple, but secretly, for fear of man. I like to keep at a distance from the plain of Dura. Or if, against my will, I find myself there, I am prone to stifle my beliefs and to deny my Master. It is the spirit of the craven and traitor; and I must pray Him out of my weakness to make me strong with His strength.

Duty, Faith, Sacrifice, Testimony: these be the watchwords which dominate me.

January 21.

THIS NON-SUCH JESUS CHRIST.

"There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."—Ps. lxxiii. 25.

IT matters not to what tests I subject Him, or by what measurements I strive in vain to comprehend His worth. This has always to be my conclusion, *There is none that I desire beside Thee.*

Can I discover where His thought of me commenced, and His solicitude over me? John Bunyan writes that, when the Pilgrims came to the Enchanted Ground, Christian said, "Now then, to prevent drowsiness in this place, let us fall into good discourse." "With all my heart," said Hopeful. "Where shall we begin?" Christian asked; and Hopeful answered, "Where God began with us." Ah, but the beginning of His mercy is too remote for my scrutiny to find and fix. It is changeless, incalculable, fathomless. The Only Begotten was surrendered for me from the most distant past. And Jesus had made my cup of shame and death His own, ages before He was born in Bethlehem and slain on Golgotha.

And can I estimate how much His victorious might accomplishes on my behalf? If I construct a chart of my pilgrim-road, I see that, at every stage in the journey and every crisis in the war, Christ is to me the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. It is He Who, by the spectacle of His wounds, teaches me

the hatefulness of my sin and the depth of my disease. It is He Who, through His merit, silences all my accusers, and pardons and justifies my guilty soul. It is He Who, dwelling in me, sanctifies my nature, deepens my purity, makes me meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. I am in the presence of a strength which is boundless and shoreless and endless, when I am with my Lord and Saviour.

And can I expound what blessedness He brings me, even by the chastening of His rod? Like Him, I drink the wine of astonishment; I am tempted on every side; I bear about in my body the dying of my Master. But I am instructed, cleansed, energised, by the trials He sends. William Cowper sang, "Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die." In actual fact, he died in gloom and despondency, without a ray of moon or star. But, an hour after his spirit had gone, there was on his face, his biographer says, "a look of holy surprise." He was marvelling, in the presence of Christ, at the glories of the better country. And so, through fire and water, I come, here and hereafter, to the wealthiest place.

The constant refrain of a Scottish martyr, who suffered at the Gallow-Lee, was, "O, for love to Him!" "It hath been my great trouble," he confessed, "that I could never love Him much. . . . O, for love to this nonsuch Jesus Christ!" It will be well with me, if this is my great trouble, and this my constant refrain.

January 22.

THY WILL BE DONE, THOUGH IN MY OWN UNDOING.

"*Blessed be God, . . . who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.*"—2 Cor. i. 4.

HE carries out His holy will; and sometimes it means a sore conflict, or an emptied home, or an orphaned heart for me. But by and by His consolations fall on my stricken spirit, like the soft rain on the mown grass. And what then? This: I have been comforted, that in my turn I may comfort. He afflicts me first and heals me afterwards, because He wishes to fashion me into a missionary of peace to the tempest-driven. There are many around me on whom griefs like my own are laid; and who can uphold and strengthen them so well as one who has been in the wilderness of desolation and the gloomy Valley of Death's Shade before them?

Perhaps it is the agony of doubt. For them the sky of truth is overcast with brooding clouds, and they do not see the Sun. They are unable to seize and hold the great verities of the Christian faith. They walk in darkness, and have no light. Occasionally doubt is assumed easily, and worn with jauntiness and gaiety. But there are other cases in which it is poignant, piercing, terrible. And was I never out in this desert? And to-day have I reached certainty after questioning, peace

after disquiet of the mind? It is that I may go and minister to my neighbours in distress.

Perhaps it is the onset of temptation. Their feet, too careless, too rashly bold, are slipping—slipping gradually and fatally over the edge of the precipice into gulfs of sin. They are in mortal peril. Unless deliverance come soon, they will do that which they must regret to their dying day. They will defile their own conscience, and sadden the friends who love them best, and wound Christ. But have I been lifted from the pit? Surely I should tell them of the strong hand and the tender heart of the Saviour. Surely I should pilot them to the safe anchorage.

Perhaps it is the solitude of bereavement. Azrael, the angel of death, has crossed their threshold, and borne from them the treasure they fain would have kept. They sit cold by the fire, and scarce endure to draw their breath, and think, "How good! how kind! and he is gone." The staff is lost on which they leaned. The comrade walks no more by their side. And have not I known this heartbreak? Have not I been compelled to drink this Marah-spring? Then let me assure them that there is One Who can speak to their spirit in the dreary place.

My own sorrows must not be squandered and thrown away. They are meant to mould me into a Barnabas, a Son of Consolation, who recalls the stragglers and refreshes the outworn.

January 23.

THE VIOLENT MAN TAKES THE KINGDOM BY FORCE.

"*Have mercy upon me, O God.*"—Ps. li. 1.

THREE great boons David the sinner ventures to ask for himself in this penitential and prevailing Psalm.

Pardon is the first of them. *According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies,* he cries, *blot out my transgressions.* Against his name, in God's recording book, stood an accusing and incriminating record. He, the anointed king of Israel, the captain of the Lord's host, the soldier and the saint, had wandered far and had fallen low. And now, if the old friendship with heaven were to be restored, God must forgive him, and must delete that black indictment. It is my initial and fundamental need. That for Jesus' sake, Who bore my sin in His own body on the Tree, my guilt should be cancelled. That the criminal should be dismissed from the holy tribunal, free and just. That transgression should be blotted out. Then the burden is lifted from my back. Then the day dawns rosy in the East. Then I have liberty to serve and love.

Purity is the second boon. *Create in me,* says David, *a clean heart.* Had he not defiled all the chambers of his soul? Wicked imaginings had prompted wicked resolves, and these had issued in wicked deeds. He longed to be washed from the befouling memories and thoughts. The prayer pierces deep, going down to the

abysmal places of the life. It demands much, coveting nothing less than the new creation of the entire nature. It climbs high, panting and aspiring after spotlessness.

> Whiteness most white. Ah, to be clean again
> In mine own sight and God's most holy sight!
> To reach thro' any flood or fire of pain,
> Whiteness most white!

But the prayer succeeds, for it mounts to One with Whom all things are possible.

And gladness is the third boon. *Restore unto me*, David pleads, *the joy of Thy salvation.* It is a daring petition for one whose iniquity had been so ugly and so cruel. Can he have again the jubilant spirit? Will he raise his voice once more in song? Yes, he understands the God with Whom he has to do: how there are no reserves and abatements in His salvation; how, when He takes the prodigal back, it is to music and dancing. If He has forgiven me, if He is cleansing me, if I am His child, why do I walk among shadows and fears? My face should shine; and I should be one of the *joculatores Domini*, the merry men of the Lord. Only thus shall I possess in its breadth and length the goodly heritage which He intends for me. And only thus shall I commend His Holy Land to friends and neighbours around.

In my New Testament day let me not fall below the heights of prayer and expectancy attained by David long ago.

January 24.

HOW SHARPER THAN A SERPENT'S TOOTH!

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."—GEN. iii. 1.

SIN draws near to me, ensnares me, vanquishes me, like the serpent.

There is the persistent vitality of it. For long months the serpent will lie motionless and inert, apparently dead. But the torpor is more in semblance than in reality. It will be ended ere long; and, once the sleeper is roused, it will, as a naturalist says, "outclimb the monkey, outswim the fish, outleap the zebra, outwrestle the athlete." That is how it is with sin. I think it dead. I fancy that the vigour and the victory are gone from my old passions. And lo! before I am aware, it springs into fresh life, and strangles me. Years after my regeneration, when my holiness seems secure, I may be overtaken by hateful evil, and may succumb.

There is the haunting omnipresence of it. In the hot lands where the serpent is found, it makes its way everywhere. Over fence and barrier it curls and twists itself, into corner and cranny and hidden recess. House and sleeping-place can scarcely be protected against its impudent and deadly intrusion. And sin is equally ubiquitous. I may miss wealth and influence and friendship, but I cannot miss and escape temptation. It will appear where I least expect to see it. It will conquer me

when I imagine that danger is far away. The chamber of secret prayer, the sanctuary of God itself, may be invaded by the foe.

There is the horrible fascination of it. *The serpent is more subtil than any beast of the field.* It mesmerises its victims. It holds them enthralled and helpless with its gaze. It steals on them with the noiselessness of its approach. It perplexes them with its circling folds, until they are hopelessly enmeshed, like Laocoon and his sons. So sin bewilders me, appealing to imagination and desire, trapping and humiliating my strength in mysterious ways. I am utterly confused. I fall an easy prey to the clever and cruel tempter. It is useless for me to match my poor wisdom and my paltry resource against such strategy and glamour and legerdemain.

And there is the awful power of it. The serpent has a sinewy and resistless force which is able to crush even the tiger. Its coils gather rapidly and pitilessly about its miserable quarry. Its stroke flashes poison through the blood. And against sin what can I do? To extricate one part of my being is only to entangle another. To put off gross outward faults is to engender more perilous tempers within—pride, vanity, self-righteousness, the slumber of the soul. I am at the mercy of my unrelenting adversary. In this mortal combat I am without might. "Full soon am I downridden."

Yes, until He comes to me, Who bruises the serpent's head and frees the captive. Many are my infirmities, many and great; but His medicine is mightier.

January 25.

GOD'S LITTLE IS VERY MUCH.

"*What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*"—Mic. vi. 8.

SIMPLICITY and comprehensiveness mark the requirements of my God. He can abbreviate His law into the fewest words; but they are words which embrace inward and outward, present and future, the earthly and the heavenly.

I may fall into serious error regarding His will for me. It is not a religion of observances about which He is most anxious; how easily I attach an undue importance to ceremonies and forms, rites and penances and fasts and feasts! Nor does He solicit primarily a religion of moralities; if it abides alone, it is external, and He looks on my heart. Nor is it a religion of emotions of which He is in quest; I may have much feeling without being a son in His family—I may put romance and yearning, excitement and tears, in the room of saving grace and childlike obedience.

But see, my soul, God asks righteousness. I cannot be His, unless I *do justly*. All that takes an improper advantage of another, and all that departs from the straightest line of absolute rectitude, I must hate and abjure, practising and following its contradictory and opposite. It is a demand which pierces deeper than it seems. For the integrity of conduct He desires is the outcome only of a conscience

He has quickened, and a will He has bent into submission to His law. The ethics of the Gospel are preceded and rendered possible by the redemption and regeneration of the Gospel.

And God asks tenderness. He counsels me to *love mercy*. The world is full of sorrow, as a tropical forest is full of destruction and death ; and I am to move through it a good physician, befriending, curing. It is what He does Himself. Every glorious quality has its fountain in Him, but pre-eminently the quality of mercy. He is the great Forgiver and the great Helper ; no earthly father loves like Him, and no mother is half so mild. So my feeble torch is but kindled at His altar. My charities and philanthropies must be learned in His school Who pardons my ten thousand transgressions.

And God asks lowliness. He commands me to lay my hand in His, and to *walk humbly* in His company. Nothing is so essential as poverty of spirit. It is the source and spring from which alone runs the fertilising river of a holy life. It is the Campo Santo where the flowers of heaven find their congenial soil, and grow into beauty and fragrance. All duties and all sanctities are attainable by the heart which distrusts itself and leans hard on its Lord. And I only begin to be a disciple when my lofty looks are brought low and my Saviour is lifted high.

Now, my Father, if these are to be the features of my soul, it is manifest that none but Thyself can create them, and can foster them, and can lead them to their perfection. Do Thou the work, and bear Thou the glory.

January 26.

BE YE SEPARATE.

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." — John xvii. 16.

CHRIST did not mean that I am to withdraw and seclude myself from my neighbours. He did not do so Himself; there could have been no salvation for me if He had. Because I was in evil case, He came and dwelt with me; He was my Brother and my Good Shepherd. And He bids me walk in His footsteps. If I am to say farewell to the world at times, that I may have freedom for quiet fellowship with God, I am to live among its citizens, a child there of the Highest.

Neither did He mean that I am to be censorious towards those around me. There was no censoriousness in Him. Wherever He went, His presence diffused sunshine and warmth and joy. He does not wish me to moralise on the defects and errors of others. He has no desire that I should be keen-eyed, judicial, stern. I may be unsparing in judging myself; but in my thoughts and words regarding my brothers there must be all considerateness, all geniality, all patience and hope.

What, then, did He mean? This: that I am not to give the impression that I am at home in the world, and that I have no other home. This: that every day I must show myself under the law of a life which is born from above. This: that there must be an easily perceived difference between me and

those who do not travel beyond the present realm of things. And this: that, however friendly I am with others, I hold aloof from their dubious beliefs and habits; I inspire in them a kind of reverence; I make them understand that my work is to glorify God, that my model is Christ, and that my citizenship is in heaven. Again, let me consider my Master. None drew closer to men and women; yet always there was a distinction felt and seen. Enemies and friends recognised it. And I am to have such an intense personal devotion to Him, that I shall be found only where I believe He would be, and that I shall practise and follow only what He approves. It is to be my one fear lest I "hurt His kind heart." Here is my rule: *Not of the world, even as He was not of the world.*

The rule is to be operative everywhere. It will cast out of my business whatever is evil, and I shall count it impossible to do anything false and ungenerous in the workshop and the counting-house. It will hallow my amusements. I shall suspect the relaxation into which the thought of Christ intrudes like a shadow, and welcome the happiness to which He goes with me. It will direct me as I read at home, and as I walk abroad; I shall press the creations of literature into His service, and I shall hear His voice among the trees of the garden and not be afraid. It is the talisman for the whole of my history: I am to be what He was; I am to do what He did.

January 27.

BUT, THOUGH SEPARATE, ACCESSIBLE AND KIND.

"As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."—JOHN xvii. 18.

I LIVE apart in spirit, and yet I am God's ambassador to the world.

The disciple needs the mission. I may wonder why I am not carried past all my temptations so soon as I put my faith in Christ, and why He does not invite me immediately to enter the Sabbath-rest of God. But my Leader knows what is best for me. It is to promote my good, to increase my strength and grace, that He bids me tarry. The Father sent the Son into the world partly for the Son's sake, that He might receive the name which is above every name, and might gather to His sceptre a multitude of subjects. So Jesus commands me to stay on the earthward side of His heaven; that I may learn many lessons, about the evil of sin in myself and in others, about my Lord's sustaining and sanctifying mercy, and about the crown which is not gained except through peril and toil.

And the world needs the mission. That was a chief cause why the Father sent Christ: not to condemn the world, but to save it. *Even so also* He would have me prove a saviour to those whose necessity calls aloud for help and deliverance. I cannot do for them what He did, when He died and rose again. But I can direct them to Him—Him

Who will quell their remorse, Who will still their lament over blighted hopes and broken vows, Who will end their bankruptcy. "Never be joyful," says one of the apocryphal Gospels, "save when you look upon your brother in love"; and it is the imperative which ought to govern me. If my spiritual sense were quick enough, I should hear and mark how the creation groans and travails in pain, and it would be my daily work to heal its grievous wound.

And the Father needs the mission. Did not God send Jesus, that His own character might be revealed, His own law vindicated, His own love have freest and fullest scope? What Jesus was in His infinite measure I am to be in my smaller and humbler degree, an interpreter of God, an evangelist for God, a partner with God. I am intended to commend His truth, to illustrate His holiness and glory, to build up His city of salvation. Let me tell myself each morning that, however poor my lot may be and however few my powers, He summons me to be a labourer with Him, and requires the tribute of my service, and will strengthen me inwardly with might so that nothing shall be too lofty and too hard. Then my grandeur will rival that of the "princes of the chariot."

Sent into the world as Jesus Christ was sent: what a magnificent life it is! I have a soul to nurture; I have a world to succour and leaven; I have a Father to glorify. No tasks are greater. No privileges are more sublime.

January 28.

THE DOUBLE WILL OF JESUS CHRIST.

"He entered into an house, and would have no man know it; but He could not be hid."—MARK vii. 24.

IT was His will to be alone for a little while, in silence and quietness. His meekness will explain the desire; for He had no hankering after human recognition and applause—the Father's eye and the Father's "Well done" were enough for Him. And His sensitiveness will explain it; there must have been moments when He shrank from the vision of the sins of men, and when His heart was sick and sore. And His prayerfulness will explain it; both His divinity and His humanity conspired to make Him a Lover and Devotee of secret prayer—to the Only Begotten of the Father the communion was a reminiscence of the bright world He had left behind; to the Saviour clothed in the likeness of my sinful flesh it was indispensable, if He was to finish the work given Him to do. And in meekness, in sensitiveness, in prayerfulness, He is my Exemplar. I am to put aside reward, and to choose the lowliest part, and to live for the glory of God. I am to recoil from evil, as one recoils from the breath of pestilence. From God I am to supplicate grace, strength, perseverance to the end, the fulness of the Holy Ghost.

Such then, was His will and purpose, when He entered the house on the confines of the heathen country, hoping that for a brief period

no one might know His covert and retreat. But soon a second will disclosed itself, and gained the victory over the first. *He could not be hid.* His goodness was self-revealing, and even on the borders of Tyre and Sidon there was some rift in the cloud which let the glory through. Sin and sorrow, moreover, were drawn to Him instinctively, as the iron filings are drawn by the magnet; *a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet.* And when did He ever refuse to sacrifice Himself for the sake of the heavy-laden?—He could do nothing else than surrender to the mother's petition, although it brought Him once more into the crowd. Again He is my Pattern. My Christianity should have a decisiveness and a perfume which bewray themselves. It should be of that enticing and inviting order, which attracts poor and perishing souls, not so much to me as to my Lord. It should compel me to crucify myself, that I may guide the sinner and the sufferer into the ways of peace.

Christ's first will and His second: behold, they are very good; and both of them are to be caught and reproduced by me. I must often seclude myself, counting it better to "walk the realm unseen" than to "watch the hour's event." Yet I must never be ashamed to declare my faith and my Master. And I must renounce comfort and rest, privacy and peace, because the call of those ready to die rings compellingly in my ear.

January 29.

MY BOUNDLESS AND RUNNING-OVER LORD.

"*For Thy word's sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou wrought all this greatness, to make Thy servant know it.*"—2 SAM. vii. 21.

SO David spoke thankfully and adoringly, tracing to two matchless sources the unsearchable riches which God had lavished on himself. I like to think of both fountains,—fountains deeper and more refreshing than Hippocrene, or Bandusia, or Siloa's brook, flowing fast by the holy oracles of Zion.

For His Word's sake God blesses me. He has bound Himself to do so by all the great and precious promises which He has uttered in my hearing. His Book, from Genesis to Revelation, is studded with them, as the midnight sky gleams and flashes with its sparkling lights. I heard once of a saint who set out to count the promises of the Bible; but, having enumerated thirty-eight thousand, he abandoned the attempt in despair. Indeed, it was a quixotic enterprise. For all the names of my heavenly Lord are implicit promises. And so are the various doctrines of His truth. And so are His mighty acts in the past history of His people. And, having spoken thus often and thus strongly, *by divers portions and in divers manners*, He will perform; He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. His own faith-keeping

character ensures that He will fulfil His largest engagements. What He has pledged Himself to give me in time and in eternity, He will bestow.

And according to His own heart God blesses me. I fancy that the new clause outruns and surpasses its predecessor, glorious although that is. The language of the lips cannot unveil all that lies in the soul; the promises of my Lord do not explain and exhaust His thoughts of peace; God's heart is fuller, profounder, tenderer, more mysterious, more ineffable, than God's Word. Mr. Browning imagines Rafael leaving his painting to make a century of sonnets, that in this hitherto untried art he might more adequately unfold his love for La Fornarina; and Dante forsaking his poetry to paint an angel, that through this novel channel he might the better please his Beatrice. God, too, has to pass beyond the Bible, satisfying as the Bible is, if He would unveil to me the plenitude of His grace and mercy and peace. Hints of it come in the supremest moments of my life here, when I am caught up into the third heaven, and hear words which it is not lawful to utter. But I must wait for the everlasting future, if I would comprehend all that He has planned, and all that He has gained for my soul. What king has wealth like mine?

Father of fathers, make me, Thy unworthy servant, know the greatness Thy Word predicts for me, and the vaster greatness Thy heart intends me to enjoy.

January 30.

THE BONFIRE OF VANITIES.

"*Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men.*"—ACTS xix. 19.

NO conflagration could be more desirable and more salutary. I trust that it is paralleled and repeated in my own experience. For I am no Christian until it is.

When I burn my bad books, when I turn from my old delights, when the expulsive power of a new affection drives me irresistibly from the life which I used to live: that means Conversion. It is evidence and token that a superhuman and radical change has transformed me. It is proof not to be gainsaid that God the Holy Spirit is at work in the citadel of my being. Never shall I forgo a darling sin, never sacrifice that which brought me an iniquitous profit and an unholy pleasure, until He comes in His mightiness, and revolutionises my nature through and through. From the soul which should have been God's Temple, but which I have debased into a den of robbers, He scourges the traffickers; and the desecrated place is renovated into the shrine and residence of the King of kings.

When I burn my bad books, when before all men I forswear my former ways, when I range myself openly on His part Whom I despised and hated yesterday: that means Confession. "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord, or to defend His cause," this rightful Lord Who has

dethroned the usurper and despoils him of his goods. "Stand thou on that side, for on this am I": it is what I say, fearlessly, publicly, without abatements or concealments or regrets. No real friend of Jesus Christ can smother his friendship. It must disclose itself. It will be discerned by the onlookers, whether they sympathise or disapprove. Through all hindrances, all timidities, all plausible excuses for holding my peace, may my affection for Him make its avowal and sing its song. Is not Benjamin Franklin's aphorism one never to be forgotten, "If we must give account for every idle word, so must we for every idle silence"?

When I burn my bad books, when I declare that henceforward I am to travel in another direction, when transports move and thrill me to which I was a stranger until now: that means Consecration. One is the Master of my transfigured history, even Christ. I cannot tolerate what He disapproves. I cannot harbour guests and tenants who are out of harmony with His purity and perfectness. Whither He goes, I will go; and where He lodges, I will lodge; His people shall be my people; and His God my God—naught but death will part Him and me; nay, death will not terminate my loyalty, but will only render it more absolute and complete. In spirit and soul and body, in my work and in my rest, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?

That is a happy day on which I kindle my Bonfire of Vanities. It cannot dawn too soon, and the fire cannot burn with too white a flame.

January 31.

REX QUONDAM, REXQUE FUTURUS.

"*All ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord.*"—Ps. xxii. 27.

THE kingdom of God is destined, and is fitted, to reign over all.

The princes in literature have but a circumscribed empire. Probably it is the minority, even in the surroundings of highest civilisation and culture, who have a real joy in the great books of the world. Homer and Virgil, Thucydides and Tacitus, are unknown to the multitude. Thousands cannot appreciate the *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* or the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. Thousands remain untouched by Lord Macaulay's vivid story of Glencoe, or by the burning pages in which Carlyle portrays Mirabeau and Charlotte Corday and the incorruptible Robespierre.

The monarchs of the world do not wield a universal sceptre. There were territories over which the Roman eagles did not fly, peoples who did not feel the mailed and iron grip of the legionaries of Cæsar. To-day Britain has a vast dominion. We,

> Who stretch one hand to Huron's bearded pines,
> And one on Kashmir's snowy shoulder lay,
> And round the streaming of whose raiment shines
> The iris of the Australasian spray,—

we may boast that east and west obey the fiat of our king. But there are many regions which the British sovereign does not own, and

many fortresses from which his flag does not float.

The false gods, I rejoice to think, are not omnipresent and almighty. The ancient deities had but an evanescent reign; who trembles now before the names of Baal and Zeus and the Olympian Jove? The wicked powers are as limited in their dominion still. Idolatry, superstition, drunkenness, uncleanness, carelessness, lawlessness: these have votaries only too numerous. But everywhere there are redeemed and royal-hearted men and women who refuse to bow the knee to them, and who serve the God Who is living and true.

It is my divine Lord alone in Whom the children of men, whoever they be, discover their Refuge and their Rest. It is He, and none else, to Whom *all the ends of the earth* will turn. What a hope for the world's regeneration the thought should stir in me! This is the Gospel for north and south alike. This is the salvation which is without boundary and shore. This is the potency, and this the love, that are the same under every sky. Ay, and when peoples and nations and kindreds and tongues accept His grace, they are coming back to their true home. They *remember* as well as turn. Through all their paganisms, their wanderings, their disobediences, they have been pursued by the recollection of their Father and King. Never are they at peace till they retrace their steps to Him. And I would do my little part in drawing them back.

February.

February fills the dyke
With black, with white,
With the gold o' the flower that's like
The stars at night.

Grey south wind and a grey sky,
And a new hope
Aids the heavy heart on high,
Lifts it up.

February spreads the board,
Sets the feast,
Makes an altar to the Lord,
Vests the priest.

See in gardens freaked with snow
Miracles!
Snowdrops, as the wind will blow,
Ring their bells.

Bid the pious folk come in,
And to their knees!
Silver Introits now begin
In all the trees.

Hear the blackbird chorister,
At dawn, at even:
His wild chant, so fresh, so rare,
A song of heaven.

Hear the thrush in all the bowers,
And hear the lark!
Now the day's a Book of Hours
From dawn to dark.

The full-bosomed earth is young
Under the snows.
Every grass-blade newly sprung
Breathes like a rose.

Little streamlets lately dumb
Lift a small voice—
Bid Christ's creatures in halidom
Hear and rejoice.

KATHARINE TYNAN.

There are Three Benedictions to awake my Song.

"Dear children," said John Tauler, as he preached in Strassburg, "when a man has been brought into the gladness and glory of the bride-chamber, earthly festivals are to him amongst the things that are passed away. He rejoices no more in Christmas, nor in Easter, nor in any feast of the calendar: but he rejoices every day in the high festival of God's marvellous and surpassing love." Do I not sit at the wedding banquet, when I behold the Saviour Who takes away my sin?

Christ's work is portrayed in the New Testament by three words, each of which should constrain me to raise my clear and joyful psalm.

It is Reconciliation. *This is His work as Prophet. He publishes peace between God and me. He asks Him: "Canst Thou be friendly with one who has broken Thy law and flouted Thy love?" And God answers the Envoy with the white flag of truce: "Yes, for Thou hast opened the way by which My banished may return." Then the Ambassador turns to me, and asks: "Wilt thou cease to rebel?" And I reply: "Thou hast conquered me by Thy grace; Thou hast broken every barrier down." So the Preacher of the good news prevails with the Father on the throne and with the disobedient child in the far country.*

It is Propitiation. *This is His work as Priest. It is harder, heavier, painfuller than the Prophet's. It lies behind the Prophet's. Jesus not only announces the ratification of friendship between God and my soul; He has made the friendship firm and fast by rendering a full satisfaction for my sin. He laid Himself down, a spotless Lamb, on the altar-fires. The theme the Prophet expounds is the acting and suffering, the doing and enduring, of the Priest: how God's righteousness and my own conscience demand so supreme a sacrifice, ere all can be well. I thank my Lord Jesus Christ that He propitiates before He reconciles.*

And it is Redemption. *This is His work as King. He ends my slavery to death and evil; the weary days and nights are over. Moreover, He gives me back my lost inheritance, of sonship or daughterhood, of God's favour and God's purity, of His presence meantime and His home at last. I am rich, who once was poor. Let me be sure that I am enjoying the fulness of my enfranchisement, and am claiming the best robe and the ring of gold. The enemy must not defraud me of a fraction of my estate, purchased at such cost and freely made my own. Sin must have no dominion over a heart and a life which Christ has redeemed.*

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

February 1.

WE TWO ARE SO JOINED.

"*The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*"—Ex. iii. 15.

THE human friend is good; but the divine Friend is inconceivably better. If He is very high, He brings Himself very near.

This is the union of the Wealthy with the poor. God is self-sufficient. He is independent. Much as He longs for me, I and my love and my obedience are not indispensable either to His existence or to His blessedness. But Abraham is a wanderer in a land of strangers; and in Isaac's tent there is no one whose thoughts are in unison with his own; and Jacob is a medley of contradictions and jarring qualities. These are the men, full of necessities and thirsts, with whom God makes His covenant. I am a bundle of wants, till He Whom none can bind binds Himself to me.

And this is the union of the Everlasting with the dying. To God duration is an unceasing Now, a day which no night quenches and abases; and He sees the end from the beginning. But Abraham, Isaac, Jacob: death came to them long ago, and closed their pilgrimage, and laid them to sleep. Yes, but what then? It did not stay their real life. It did not destroy their souls. It did not kill their hopes, their energies, their affections. Let me be linked with the imperishable God, and I shall never become a handful of desert dust: He is not the God of the dead but of the living.

This is the union, too, of the Holy with the sinful. God's purity is incapable of taint. It abides and lasts. It is gentle and gracious no less than radiant and bright. But Abraham can screen himself from danger by acting a lie ; Isaac is selfishly anxious for his own ease : Jacob is a master in duplicity and craft. I thank the holy, holy, holy Lord that to these men He allies Himself in friendship and peace. It assures me of His readiness to pardon all my past, to renew me in the spirit of my mind, to raise and refine me into indubitable sonship with Himself. It proclaims the good tidings that my defilement does not check the outflow of His love.

And this is the union of the One with the many. God is One ; uniform in His purposes, His decisions, His actings ; the Same yesterday and to-day and for ever. But men are many ; each with his own temperament, his own career, his own conflict, his own goal. Abraham is massive and courageous ; Isaac is quiet and pensive ; Jacob is clever and indefatigable. It matters not. Let me be a little child or a white-haired veteran, let me be strong or weak, God adapts Himself to me. There is none so changeless and yet so protean as my wondrous Lord. Whoever and whatever I may be, He will take my whole being into His hands, and will satisfy me with His favour.

Shall I not rejoice in His overflowing fulness ? Shall I not yield the heart I cannot keep to His salvation ? " Yea, through life, death, through sorrow and through sinning, He shall suffice me."

February 2.

WHEN 'TIS TIME TO GO TO BED.

"Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."—1 THESS. iv. 14.

A SUGGESTIVE writer has divided men and women into three groups, making their attitude towards immortality the touchstone. There are many who are practically uninfluenced by the future life; these are the Laodiceans, who think less about it than about the price of food or coal. There are others who put the supernatural altogether out of their beliefs and hopes: these are the Gallionians, who deliberately care for none of those things. But there are others still who lay hold with the anchor of faith on the shores of the better country: these are the Teresians, to whom, as to St. Teresa, it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. In this world of the dead and the dying, I would be enrolled in the last group.

Then the sepulchre itself will surrender its gloom and repulsiveness. Then it will be "but a withdrawing room, to retire in for a while, a going to bed to take rest sweeter than sleep."

For the grave will be the house which God has appointed for me. It is He Who has prepared it. It is He Who conducts me through the narrow porch and into the shaded rooms. Can I not confide in His wisdom and His grace? Is it not impossible that He should inflict any harm on a child of His family? He sees that I need the repose after my labour, my wayfaring,

my warfare. He is well acquainted with the place where I lie, His eyes passing through "green turf or white allotted stone." The secrets of my sepulchre, and the sepulchres of my kindred, are open to Him, Who never can leave nor forsake them and me.

And the grave will be the house which Jesus has entered before I reached it. Its dim recesses have been illuminated and perfumed by His presence: the scent of the spikenard clings to them still, though many centuries have come and gone since He rose and hastened home to His Father and mine. After His obedience, His sorrow, His battle, His victory, He went down into the valley of death to snatch the brief rest of a tired warrior there. And in the valley He has left a glory behind Him which, when I descend to it, should scatter the threatening cloud and mist.

And the grave will be the house whose aspect fronts the gates and towers of the New Jerusalem. It is not my final experience and my ultimate abode. It is only a quiet inn, where the traveller halts for a night—a night longer or shorter as God shall determine, but moving infallibly towards the splendid day-dawn. The slumbering body will awake; and, spiritualised and beautified, it will rejoin the waiting soul. It is incorruptible at length. It is conformed to the matchless *body of Christ's glory*. And "the lost beloved faces, I see them glad and free."

I will comfort myself with these words. I will believe in the graciousness of the grave.

February 3.

THE TOUCHSTONE.

"*See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the Mount.*"—HEB. viii. 5.

I AM commanded, and no command can be so beneficial, to make all things — thought, motive, speech, activity — after the pattern which I have seen in the Mount: not the Mount that burned with fire, but that more mysterious, more sorrowful, and more glorious Mount where the Cross of Jesus stood.

For example, the astonishing spectacle of Calvary ought to regulate my ideas of sin. That the very Son of the Highest God, Himself God over all, although for a time He had veiled His kinghood beneath an unassuming dress—that He, Whom angels worship, Whom heaven cannot hold nor earth sustain, must spill and shed His blood to wash out my iniquity: what a lurid light it throws on the malignity and foulness of my transgression! The horror of sin, the ill-desert of it, the indignation and the loathing which it should rouse within the soul: I behold them on the Mount as I behold them nowhere else, and it is only when I wander from its slope that I excuse and minimise the evil thing.

And Calvary ought to be the remembrancer to my heart of a peace that overcomes every misgiving and passes all understanding. The Mount is more than the measure of my sin; it is the disclosure of the saving purpose of

the Father and the healing and restoring strength of the Son. There is an infinite merit in the pains and lonelinesses of Jesus Christ; and the river of salvation which flows to me from the Hill of His shame is a victorious flood. Why should I walk in sorrow, with a downcast face and a doubting mind? Here is the remedy for all my fears.

> Who knows not Love, let him assay
> And taste that juice, which on the Crosse a pike
> Did set again abroach; then let him say
> If ever he did taste the like.

And Calvary, no less, ought to constitute my model of obedience. Did Christ bear and suffer the will of God, as He bowed His head on the Tree? I, too, must ask for help, in my seasons of heaviness, to endure as He endured. Did Christ do and finish the will of God, when by dying He spoiled the principalities and powers, and opened a way for the banished children to return, and honoured the holy law? The same passion of zeal for the Father must urge me on, and the same passion of love for men. There never was a standard of life and conduct so exacting and so stern. Ay, and there never is a history so fruitful as that which copies the pattern of Golgotha. I pray that, in submission and in godliness, I may understand the message of my Saviour's death.

So to "Thy whips, Thy nails, Thy wounds, Thy woes," O Jesus Christ, I bring myself.

February 4.

WHAT SEEMS A DESERT MAY BE A FRUITFUL FIELD.

"*Thine eyes . . . shall behold the land of far distances.*"—Isa. xxxiii. 17 (A.V. marg.).

HERE is a hint of the beauty of my common life. *The land of far distances*—the phrase brims over with melody and loveliness. It suggests the still of a perfect evening, and I have a noble prospect in front of me. In the foreground there is nothing to hurt or annoy. And in the remoter reaches the sky comes down and kisses the earth. God Himself might pronounce it all very good.

And that is what my life may be: a land tranquil, roomy, touched and transfigured by heaven.

Let me take my own personal lot. I disparage it as trifling and hampered. I complain of its difficulties. I feel so frail and so full of sin that I scout the notion of working deliverance for anybody. And if I persist in hugging the dreary pessimism to my soul, I shall live and die uselessly enough. But the meanest lot has a hundred mystic compensations. Hardship should educate. Suffering should yield peaceable fruit. Sin can be pardoned, and the sinner dedicated to splendid and sacred purposes. God may dwell in the humblest heart and the poorest home. And then, from door and window, what a wealth of hill and plain! what far distances!

Or let me turn to my neighbour. He wearies me. He repels me. He is distasteful to my sensibility. I have little patience with him. But there are the great horizons about him too. He may be a Christian in the lowliest rank, and then God counts him of priceless worth. "Here comes in old Father Barnes," writes James Smetham about one of his Methodist class-meetings. "He is eighty-six, and can hardly speak for coughing. Yet I much question whether, if his soul were shown instead of his body, we should not all look poor beside him." Or my neighbour may be outside God's family. But Christ discerns incalculable possibilities in him. Must I not revise my superficial and ungracious verdicts?

Or let me think of the church to which I belong. I criticise its worship as stereotyped and cold, its members as having little love and zeal. It would be better if I gave myself to prayer on its behalf. There is a new world close to it. There are far distances, and, when the scales fall from its eyes, it will rejoice in them. When he was a boy of nine, William Blake saw at Peckham Rye "a tree full of angels." It was an undistinguished tree to everybody else, but a miraculous tree to him. And when the church lifts her glance from the dust, she will perceive the angels of God, and her dying and living Redeemer, and the things which are unseen and eternal; and the years of her famine will be ended.

So a strange beauty hangs about my common life.

February 5.

WHO WOULD FAIL FOR ONE STEP WITHHOLDEN?

"*Thine eyes . . . shall behold a far-stretching land.*"—Isa. xxxiii. 17 (R.V.).

HERE is a message of the spaciousness of my little life. My believing history should not be restricted and shut in. It ought to move unimpeded from point to point, from stage to stage, through *a far-stretching land.*

There should be the expansion of my knowledge. Am I not acquainted with godly men and women who never get much beyond the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, His rudiments, His alphabet? That is thoroughly unworthy of those whom the Master bids to be children in malice, but to be men in understanding. And the land I am to occupy stretches so far that, although I should not lose a single day, I shall have traversed but a tiny fraction of it when I "fold my wings and cease from wanderings." The Cross and Resurrection of Christ, the victories of the Holy Ghost, the richness of the Christian hope: these continents lie waiting for my exploration. To the perfecting of my knowledge let me devote my mind with an intenser diligence.

And there should be the onward march of my holiness. The character of the disciple is a kind of unlimited and immeasurable Paradise. I never come to its margin. I never can affirm of it, "At last I have been

through it from north to south and from east to west; I have mastered all its provinces and all its parts." However long I may have been crucifying the flesh and following hard after Jesus Christ, is there not still some lurking sin to be dragged out and slain? is there not still some grace in my incomparable Lord to be appropriated and wrought into the fibre of my being? The land of holiness is vast, and it is high time that I was more conversant with the treasures which it offers to me.

And there should be the development of my service. In teaching, in healing, in comforting, in seeking to make the rule of Christ a reality among those around me, in doing the will of the Father, what opportunities I have had for ingenuity, for originality, for improving old enterprises, and for initiating plans untried before! I may not quite have failed; but for Jesus' sake I might have devised and performed ten times as much as I have done. Out of my love for Him, and my longing to win men to Him, I should be ambitious to strike forth in fresh directions, to pray more fervently, to give more liberally, to turn duty into delight, to spend and be spent. Let there be no more loitering and apathy.

Such a compass there may be, such a spaciousness, in my little life, when it belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ! "I dare avouch," cried one, "the saints know not the length and largeness of the sweet earnest, and of the green sheaves before the harvest, that might be had on this side of the water, if we should take more pains."

February 6.

GOD BRING US HOME IN PEACE!

"*Thine eyes . . . shall behold the land that is very far off.*"—Isa. xxxiii. 17 (A.V.).

HERE is a prophecy of the goal of my fleeting life. When my adversaries are finally scattered, and my permanent emancipation is accomplished, there remains for me a land, in one sense very near, in another sense *very far off*.

It is near. For I may enter it immediately. If Christ were to return, and I to be caught up to meet Him in the air, at once I should be introduced to it. Or if death, not foe but friend if I know Him Whom I have believed—death that is invisible and yet is by my side—if death should come for me, instantly I must depart to the Father's house and the sight of my Lord. The Pilgrims wait on this side of the River, and they cannot tell when they may be summoned to cross. And now the post comes to the town for Mr. Ready-to-Halt, and he bids good-bye to his crutches for ever. And by and by Mr. Honest is commanded to be prepared against this day seven-night, to present himself before his King. And soon all the trumpets are sounding for Mr. Valiant on the other side. Who will be the next at whose door the horn is blown, the next to go and see "the Head that was crowned with thorns and the Face that was spit upon" for us? It is all uncertain; but I must watch: for the messenger is near—the messenger, and the land.

Yet it is very far off. Because so much in it will be amazingly and most blessedly new. I shall be in surroundings unprecedented and extraordinary. To think that sin in its motions and importunities will be dead, that my last battle will have been fought and my last antagonist put to flight ; to have a spiritual body, that will not tempt me, and will not become wearied in my Lord's work ; to dwell, myself deathless, among those who cannot die ; to find again my lost friends, and to keep them eternally ; to look into the features of Him Who was born for my salvation, and suffered in my stead, and created me anew by His Spirit, and preserved me in spite of a thousand failures and falls : is it not a world distant enough from the world of sense and time ? I must coincide with Richard Baxter—

> My knowledge of that life is small,
> The eye of faith is dim ;
> But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
> And I shall be with Him.

The goal and the land will grow plain one day, if here and now He is to me the Chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether Lovely. When I can say, *He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings*, I am at the commencement of a progress which will not cease till He crowns me king far in the spiritual city, and I sit with Him on His throne ; I hold the end of a golden string, which will lead me in at Heaven's gate, built in Jerusalem's wall.

February 7.

SHALL I WRITE MY OWN DEATH-SENTENCE?

"Ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life."—Acts xiii. 46.

DOES it not seem the strangest of all strange things that I should slight and miss so supreme a prize? I ought to stretch out both hands to make it my own. And how can this criminal and suicidal folly be?

I may render myself unfitted for everlasting life. There are sins which govern me, and which are antagonistic to what is so persevering and so pure: the angry temper, the unclean imagination, the proud and self-satisfied will. Or perhaps the love of money prevents me from tasting that God is good. Or delight in a human friend keeps me from the Friend more gracious and more sufficing; for a subordinate virtue may leap to the throne and oust the rightful King, and then it is a danger and a vice, the corruption of the best becoming the worst.

I may misconceive and dislike the character of everlasting life. Suppose that I lift it into an ethereal region, where it has no connection with my common interests and occupations, forgetting that the service of God breaks none of my lawful and tender ties: then a career so sublimated fails to attract me. Or suppose that its consistency, its elevation, its spirituality, its watchfulness, its prayer are distasteful to me: I reject the heights, where the winds

are keen and bracing, and where my history must be more serious and strenuous—I prefer the valley-ground.

I may regard my nature as incapable of everlasting life. The sceptic and the cynic do so, who hold that "every heart, when sifted well, is a clot of warmer dust, mixed with cunning sparks of hell." The Positivist does so, who laughs at the notion of immortality for the individual soul. Or, mayhap, I am so despondent and despairing, I have such a consciousness of my sin,—sin which would incarnadine the multitudinous seas, making the green one red,—that I declare myself no subject for the mercy of God. And His mercy is infinite. It takes in Manasseh. It is meant for me.

I may rebel against the terms on which everlasting life is given. I must confess myself disqualified for it by my sin. Foul, I must fly to the Fountain God has opened; and Christ must be my sole Refuge and Trust, Christ First and Last and Midst. But it is hard for me to sacrifice and forsake the vain things which charm me most: hard for me to decrease that He may increase, until He fills the whole of my horizon. When shall I learn to say of myself what George Herbert said of himself, "Less than the least of God's mercies"?

But, whatever hinders, let me, in this day of salvation, claim the life of life. Let me be afraid of nothing so much as of banishment from God, Who has made me for Himself, so that I must ever be restless if I do not rest in Him.

February 8.

IN SHORT MEASURE LIFE MAY PERFECT BE.

"*And taking the child by the hand, He saith unto her, Talitha cumi!*"—MARK v. 41.

TALITHA CUMI! It is what Christ the Lord longs and desires to say to the children here: Little ones, awake and arise into newness of life. Young hearts, as well as older ones, need the miracle of a divine renovation. But the Shepherd is nearer to them than He is to men and women, who have wandered many miles from their first Love. And the change, from the natural to the supernatural and heavenly, is easy when all the conditions are favourable. Very readily the Holy Spirit makes His conquering way into souls which are exceedingly plastic and impressible: I know not how soon He may win His victory, at seven years, at five years, perhaps in earliest infancy. It is like the mother's call in the morning, "Up! my child," and the eyes open, and the sun is shining, and the day has begun.

Talitha cumi! It is what Christ says often to the children: Little ones, I bid you mount from the familiar surroundings and the earthly home to the celestial country, where in My presence there is fulness of joy. And then the children, hearing the voice which has a power and a music they cannot resist, rise and go. The parent misses them sorely; he fain would follow if he could; but no

speed of his "avails to hunt upon their shining trails."

> Flowers they strew—I catch the scent;
> Or tone of silver instrument
> Leaves on the wind melodious trace;
> Yet I could never see their face.

But for them it is very much better. They are where no sin defiles, or sorrow intrudes. Without regret or struggle or failing, they have laid hold on the life which is life indeed.

Talitha cumi! It is what Christ, Master of life and death, will say to the sleeping bodies of the children: Dear little ones, the eternal morning has come at last, and I bid you enter on its light and love. I like to think of all periods of human history as represented in the future world: the experience of age, the maturity of middle life, the gaiety and exuberance of the young. I cannot tell how it will be; yet I fancy that the Lord of the land will wish to see the boys and girls playing in the streets of His city, and that He will be well able to crown their happy childhood with a benediction which the most advanced saint has not received here. And in the pleasure and play of Jerusalem, I pray that my girls and boys may share.

Hazlitt affirms that Sir Joshua Reynolds's best pictures are those of his worst sitters—his children. They are, he declares, "happy, bold, and careless." The adjectives delineate the children themselves, and I would choose for them no other adjectives. But, here and hereafter, how their joys will be enhanced, if they obey Christ's *Talitha cumi!*

February 9.

CHRIST'S IS AN ETERNAL SAVIOURHOOD.

"*My delights were with the sons of men.*"—Prov. viii. 31.

I DARE not interpret of my Lord and Saviour every sentence which the author of the Proverbs writes about Wisdom: for sometimes he depicts Wisdom as almost vindictive in taking vengeance on careless and callous souls, and Christ never is vindictive, even if He is very righteous and very intolerant of sin. But in this marvellous eighth chapter, Wisdom surely is the parable and prophecy of Jesus. Of Jesus, unquestionably, it is true that, from the everlasting years of the past, His *delights were with the sons of men*. Long before I began to be, long before He came to the place where stands a Cross, long before the worlds were moulded into shape by His all-skilful hands, He was planning my redemption. I do not know through what ages and cycles He has been sealed with the blood red sign of sacrifice and death. I do not know when His love for me was born. "Ere suns and moons could wax and wane, ere stars were thunder-girt," He thought on me.

In those distant years, His were the delights of the perfect Son. He foresaw my rebelliousness against the Father and my departure from the home. And, then and there, He dedicated Himself to the stupendous task of bringing me back to my allegiance, in order that God might be glorified, and might have

His wilful and wayward child for His own again. I cannot gauge the eagerness which has always dwelt in Christ to further the Father's honour and satisfaction.

In that illimitable past, His were the delights of the happy Warrior. He was preparing His sword and spear and battle-bow for the campaign which He alone could undertake. He knew from the beginning what tyrannies and evil powers would ride roughshod over me and would hold me in thrall. And He vowed that on their own chosen field He would encounter them, and that clothed in the very nature they had discredited and debased He would scatter them in flight.

And in that old eternity, His were the delights of the compassionate Redeemer. He looked on through the future, and read my misery. I stood before Him, with a guilty conscience, with a restless heart, with an unholy life. And His pity stirred Him to a great resolve, and with a willing mind He devoted Himself to the bitter and yet blessed task of seeking and saving me. From the uncommencing years He was drinking the cup of my sin and woe.

So His grace did not originate to-day or yesterday, though it remains as fresh and full as ever. I cannot estimate its age. It was old when the angels told the shepherds in Bethlehem of the Child born to be their Healer and Lord, old when the Law of God was given in the blackness and tempest of Sinai, old when the Creator said, *Let there be Light.* And shall I not glory in a grace so enduring?

February 10.

I BOW MY HEAD.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Rom. viii. 14.

THUS it is not I who am "master of my fate," not I who am "captain of my soul." It is Some One else—Some One stronger, wiser, better by far. I would be *led by the Spirit of God.* For this is a tutelage and servitude more productive of good than any freedom which the world wots of. He is the noblest Guide, and who is so greatly to be envied as His pupil and follower, walking humbly where He points?

My thoughts—let the Spirit lead them. Then they will not be surrendered to what is trivial, or misleading, or sinful. The largest and the holiest themes will enlist my mind: God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, my soul with its powers and its needs, salvation, and eternity. I shall engage in no study on which I cannot ask my Teacher's blessing, and in which I may not rely on His help. Especially I will beseech, and expect, and receive His illumination when the Book of books is open before me. His glory will "gild the sacred page, resplendent like the sun."

My affections—let the Spirit lead them. Then, while all that is fair and inviting in nature and art and human comradeship will have its legitimate place and its constraining and controlling influence, heaven will loom largest and God will be foremost. I would have the

lower attachments and tendernesses purged and hallowed by this diviner Love. They enrich me more than I can say, and I am thankful for every one of them ; but it appeases my hunger and purifies my life as the best of them cannot do. Yielding to it, I shall carry in me a satisfied heart, and I shall be a spring of strength and grace to many another soul.

My activities—let the Spirit lead them. Then I shall be up and doing. Morning after morning I shall hear Him call me to my duties for the Master, and for the world over which the Master yearns. Day after day, He will empower me with a might which is not my own, and my labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Evening after evening, I shall subject myself to His scrutiny and wait for His verdict on what I have done. He will be the Fountain of my strength, the Standard of my aspiration, the Judge of my works. And this is the life that pleases God and that benefits men.

My hopes—let the Spirit lead them. Then consciously, rejoicingly, victoriously, I shall be stepping westward, away from the glooms behind, through a region bright, towards a heavenly destiny—not a sunset but a sunrise. The sky in front will be aglow with wonderful colour, and I shall see the Holy City descending from God. In it, as the indwelling Comforter whispers, there is a place prepared by my Lord for me. In it, He tells me, the disabilities of the present will be gone, and I shall have passed from anticipation and prayer to fulfilment. And is it not the best of prophecies and promises ?

He is well led whom the Spirit leads.

February 11.

GIVE YE THEM TO EAT.

"And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine."—1 Chron. xvi. 3.

I HAVE no right to keep my privileges and joys to myself. Gold and silver never have such sheen as when they are freely bestowed on the poor. Learning is best appreciated and grasped by my own mind, when I make the attempt to communicate it to the ignorant. My sympathy and my strength should perpetually be at the service of my weaker brother. I cannot do better than imitate David, when he *dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, a loaf of bread, and a portion of flesh, and a cake of raisins.*

Especially are the unselfishness and the liberality required of me, when God has led me into the banqueting house of His salvation, and when the banner of His redeeming love is unfurled above my head. I ought never to cease planning and labouring that others may come in too, and may sit by my side at so full a table. But what am I doing for the hungry and thirsty round the palace doors? Why is my care for them so meagre? Where is the proof of my pity?

Sometimes a spurious modesty prevents me from imparting my spiritual possessions. I plead that my own knowledge is still very limited, and that my own holiness stands in great need of deepening and confirmation. And

I forget that my Lord chooses the foolish things of the world. Sometimes a kind of unjustifiable pride holds me back. I fear that, if I should seek to do good, my actual endeavours will fall mournfully short of my ideals. And, rather than spoil my fine visions, I never translate them from the abstract into the concrete. Sometimes it is the lack of imagination which restrains and fetters me. I do not pause to picture to myself, clearly and appealingly, the sore penury of others. I do not honestly try to stand in their place, and to realise their emptinesses and wants. And, failing to see their necessity, I do nothing for them. Too often it is craven cowardice which checks my effort, I forefancy the difficulties and obstacles in my path. I have a vivid sense of the lions I shall meet. What misunderstandings await me! With what coldness my kind deeds will be rebuffed! But there are no difficulties to him who goes forward confiding in Christ, and the lions that haunt the road are shackled.

I sit at a royal marriage-feast, and my cup runneth over. Shame on me, if I forget the famishing outside! In the Isle of Man, in the time of the Civil War, the governor was accused of treason against King Charles, and was sentenced to the scaffold. He was pardoned. But the pardon fell into the hands of his enemy, who locked it in his cabinet; and the forgiven man was wrongfully done to death. Pardoned myself, shall I hold God's pardon back from my brother?

February 12.

THE HALF OF MUSIC IS TO HAVE GRIEVED.

"For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." — 2 Cor. iv. 17 (R.V.).

IT is good to know that there is a limit to affliction. It is *for the moment*. It has its appointed period. Not always will the war go on. Not always will the seas be tempest-driven. Not always will the rains descend and the winds blow. God weighs and measures, bounds and defines, my sorrows. For seven months Adolphe Monod lay in helpless suffering. Week by week his pain increased in its severity, till he had not a minute when he was free from it. But this was what he wrote: "The Desert in the morning; Gethsemane in the afternoon; Golgotha in the evening. Well, the Desert with Christ, Gethsemane with Christ, Golgotha with Christ! This is better than the pleasures of sin." And of these mornings and afternoons and evenings God has fixed and foreordained an end.

It is good to know that there is a purpose in affliction. *It worketh for us*, in our service, on our behalf. It does fall on me an aimless, undirected, capricious thing. It is the instrument and agent of my Father in Heaven. By it He would teach my mind, would soften and expand my heart, would give new robustness to my faith, would add vigour to my prayers, would fructify all my character. In his

Analecta Robert Wodrow has a touching incident of his own father. "He was much affected with his worthy son, Mr. Alexander Wodrow's, death, it being somewhat suddain and surprising. Yet he carried very Christianly under that sharp dispensation. . . . He went down to the place where his son's corpse was. He stayed some time. They enquired at him what he had been doing there. 'I was,' sayes he, 'thanking God for thretty-one years' loan of Sandy, my dear son.'" These are the flowers of submission, of patience, of trust, which grow in the clefts of a breaking heart.

It is good to know that there is a coronation after affliction. It is the prelude to *an eternal weight of glory*. And the glory will be none the less, but all the more, because it has been heralded by the grief. I am fitted for the purity of the undefiled inheritance by the cleansing and refining discipline to which I am subjected on the way to it. I welcome its sunshine and rest, because I have been out in the midnight when the gales were abroad. There are notes and chords in my everlasting song which never could have been there, if I had not discovered in my trouble the grace of the Father and the sympathy of the Son and the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Heaven is two heavens if I wrestle on towards it against storm and wind and tide.

So, when I ride up to my affliction, trusting in God, I fare like the young knight who clove the helm of his adversary; "and out from this issued the bright face of a blooming boy, fresh as a flower new-born."

February 13.

IN LOWLY POMP HE RIDES.

"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."—MATT. xxi. 5.

I THINK of the colt. It was untried and rough and wild, an unlikely servant for my Lord. And I learn that, as He came to Jerusalem, so Jesus may come to me, in ways which I do not expect, by messengers whom I am apt to despise. A stammering word spoken by a disciple who has little of the world's culture, a simple and pleading sentence in a letter, the grasp of a hand behind which throbs an eager and loving heart—that, and nothing more; these are bearers of the Christ.

I think of the multitude. Numbers who cried *Hosanna!* to-day were crying *Crucify!* soon. And I learn that those who never intend to be false and fickle, those whose only crime is that of thoughtlessness and shallow levity, may be enemies by and by to the Saviour and to their own souls. Does it not behove me to make sure that mine is a reception of Him not nominal merely but humble, sincere, decisive? Must I not dig deep, and lay the foundations carefully and well?

I think of the Temple. The traders bought and sold in its courts. The money-changers defiled it by their commerce and greed. And I learn that, if I am religious merely for the gains, of one kind or of another, which religion can bring—the worldly comfort, the social position, the good repute, the applauded and

unblemished name—Christ will not allow me to stay in His Father's House. He seeks from me other and purer motives than these. He demands truth in the inward parts.

I think of the children. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings a song was raised which Gabriel could not sing. And I learn what the praises are which the Master prizes most and best. They are spontaneous, unforced, not to be held back, like a river bursting every barrier, like the spring sun putting the fogs and frosts of winter to shame. Because I "like to sing and love the song," let me lift my roundelay to Him Who merits all my devotion and all my thanks.

I think of the Lord Himself. Every day of His Passion week, He was busy in the city, teaching the ignorant, curing the sick, speaking the parables of the Kingdom, doing the will of God. Every night, He went away from the streets and the crowded sanctuary to be alone with His Father. And I learn that I ought to labour with all my might, and to go about continually doing good. But the labour will be hard and irksome to myself, and will convey small benefit to any one else, unless I hallow all my toil by secret and earnest prayer. Before the effort is made, and after it is over, I must commend it to Him without Whose prospering favour every work is done in vain.

Here are many pregnant lessons over which to brood. The colt and the multitude, the Temple and the children and the Lord—none of them is without signification for me.

February 14.

FOES IN DISGUISE ARE THE WORST OF FOES.

"*Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.*"—Ps. xix. 12.

JUST as I may examine a portrait of myself, and be filled with surprise, and say, "I did not dream that these were my looks," so I am often a stranger to the features of my inner life. Or even if I recognise myself in the morning in the mirror of prayer and of the Word of God, I go away, and forget what manner of man I am. The territory which lies so near to me,my mind, my soul,is too frequently an unexplored territory. Its mountains of pride, its dim glens of unbelief, its marshes of stagnation and indolence, its rushing torrents of passion, I have never surveyed for myself.

This suggests one reason for the existence of my secret sins: I do not improve my opportunities of instruction. Conscience, had I hearkened to it, would have led me safely past the entanglements in which I have been trapped and snared. And I had the throne of my Father and Friend, at which I had simply to ask for His teaching in order to receive it. There was the Holy Book too. And there was the enlightening and keeping and perfecting Spirit. I have lived in the midst of sanctities and helps; but I have not profited by them as I should.

Another reason for the presence of my unobserved sin is that I measure myself by inadequate standards. I adopt the codes of belief

and behaviour which are common round about me ; I seek nothing more exacting and nothing more penetrating ; I am content to follow a leadership which loves to compromise and dislikes all serious and lofty living. As the bird and the insect are so marked and tinted that they are scarcely distinguishable from the foliage where they have their haunts, so my sins are in harmony with my environment. If I can reproduce my associates, I am well pleased, although I should call no one my Master except Christ, the " crystal Christ," harmless and undefiled and separate from sinners.

And yet another cause of the potency of my secret faults is that I am biased in my own favour. I judge sin severely in others ; I have many palliations for it in myself. Suppose, for example, that I allow temper to get the better of me, I will glorify my least beautiful moods as " righteous anger " ; and it seldom occurs to me that I am shamefully in the wrong. David was oblivious to his transgression, although he broke out in sincere and generous wrath against that imaginary evil-doer of whom the prophet Nathan told him ; and David has innumerable successors in this respect. Remiss at most times, I am peculiarly remiss when I have to deal with my personal failures and falls.

But *cleanse Thou me,* O God, *from secret faults.* They are fatal because they are hidden. They gain and grow on me stealthily. Little by little, they blunt my judgment and sap my will. Have mercy, ere it is too late !

February 15.

LET ME NOT QUIT MY ARMOUR BRIGHT.

"Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise."—EPH. v. 15 (R.V.).

SINCE my foes are so subtle, how shall I safeguard my life?

Let me examine myself more searchingly than I do. If I may believe the testimonies which have come down to me, the inspection of one's own heart used to be an exercise much more in vogue than it is among modern Christians. Probably it was overdone on many an occasion. Men probed into their emotions and their characters, when they ought to have been looking to Christ and forgetting themselves. But the pendulum now has swung to the opposite extreme. I rarely turn my gaze within. I do not sit down in the evening, to count the gain or the loss of the day. It is a foolish carelessness. Some of my opponents would be unmasked, exposed, dismissed, if I kept a little of my leisure for the salutary duty. "Know thyself," was a maxim of pagan Greece; and it is not out of date in my later time.

And let me acquire the habit of comparing myself with the Lord Jesus Christ. In a gallery of pictures the art-students are at work. They have seated themselves before the matchless paintings—the Rembrandts, the Murillos, the Turners. They copy them, line after line, colour after colour. In the end

they are discontented. "We must do better in our next attempt," they tell themselves. And I am to find out my flaws, I am to try my progress, by summoning Christ before me. From all other patterns and standards I am to get away to Him Who is more lustrous than the sun. It will humble me. It will be the death-wound of my self-conceit. It will unveil many unsuspected sins. But it is the sure method of growth in knowledge and in grace.

And let me commit myself daily to God in prayer. He can answer my cries. He can invest me with a strength mightier than any bosom-iniquity, His own strength in my soul. They say that, a few miles out at sea, all pernicious germs cease to live. In the docks the air was charged with them; but, when the shore is fairly left behind, no trace remains of these mischievous authors of disease. So it is when I sail out into the infinite sea of God's love, and when I breathe the atmosphere of His holiness and power. My enemies vanish away. They are in the presence of One more prevailing than they are. Their enchantment fails. Their poison disappears. Their craft and force no longer lead me captive.

I have many adversaries, and I dare not challenge them to combat in my own prowess; for how soon and how shamefully they will scatter my legions and compel me to an abject surrender! But They that be with me are more than they that be with them; and I will look unto the hills whence cometh my help.

Oh! bless Thou me, and I am blest;
Oh! love Thou me, and I am fair.

February 16.

THE QUOTIDIAN BREAD.

"And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating."—Ex. xvi. 21.

THE daily bread is the gift of God. Never let me divest it of its glamour and glory, as if it were a thing common and usual. Never let me partake of it without reverence and the giving of thanks. There may not be about its bestowal the same marvel, and the same manifest miraculousness, which marked the coming of the manna to Israel: the King of kings prefers to accompany me in modest quietness rather than in flaming majesty and regal dress. But behind the loaf and the grain, above the farmer and the miller, the Father of lights stands unseen. He opens His bountiful hand, and my wants are met. Would it not be an easy thing for Him to spoil my harvests and to leave me destitute? All to Him I owe. Apart from Him I must go hungry and thirsty, a beggar and in rags. And do I praise Him for His largess as I ought?

The daily bread is to be received in faith. *Morning by morning* the men of Israel gathered the manna; and certainly I am not encouraged to lay past provision against a distant and unknown future. My Lord would prove me, by keeping me a perpetual pensioner on His charity, and a continual guest at His table. "It is a thought to me awful and beautiful," Thackeray says, "that of the daily prayer, and of the myriads of fellow-men uttering it,

in care and in sickness, in doubt and in poverty, in health and in wealth: *Panem nostrum da nobis hodie.*" I never can be self-centred and sufficient. I never can walk alone. I should scarcely be of those who "over-rule their stars, and with their own militia contend with the host of heaven." I am taught to cling and trust, to look up and wait in hope.

The daily bread is a parable of higher and more sacred things. The children of Israel saw in the manna something unearthly and inexplicable. *They wist not what it was.* I sit at my food and drink, and a window should be opened for me into a world more wonderful and more divine. I should see Him Who is the Bread of my undying spirit, Him Who gives to me the Water of an everlasting life. Him, too, I must seek and find with the return of every fresh morning. I cannot thrive on the grace of yesterday, nourishing and ample as that was for yesterday's need. I must welcome, hour after hour, and minute after minute, a new pardon, a new sanctity, a new wisdom, a new strength to foil and overthrow the world and the flesh and the devil, a new peace of God to garrison my heart and mind. With each sunrising mine ought to be a mightier and fuller Christ.

> Thus from tables here below,
> Straight to upper rooms we go,
> Eating holy supper so!

And, when I sit at breakfast or at the evening meal, lo, the door may open, and the Lord may enter the room.

February 17.

HE DREW ME, AND I FOLLOWED ON.

"He saw a publican named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom; and He said unto him, Follow Me."—LUKE v. 27.

THE miracles of Christ in the moral sphere, miracles which He has been repeating through all the generations and which flow from Him still, are more amazing and gladdening than those He wrought on the bodies of men and in the realm of external nature. They are the consummate proof of His might and mercy.

Does He not cure the ache of the soul? I may be certain that Levi was ill at ease and unhappy, concealing under careless looks a bleeding heart. For he had done that which every patriotic Jew most scorned and despised. He had sold himself to the Romans, the tyrannical masters who defrauded his country of its birthright of freedom. From his kinsfolk and brothers he exacted the taxes imposed by the hated foreigner. His conscience upbraided him and gave him no quiet, until, one unforgettable day, Jesus withdrew him from the dishonourable trade, and he had rest. And is not my soul, too, dissatisfied, comfortless, self-accusing? And has the Saviour healed, effectually and for ever, its weariness and fret?

Yes; and does He not calm the discords of the home? For, among the tax-gatherer's relatives and friends, what anger there was that one of their own should show himself so

traitorous and so evil! It may well be that Levi found the doors of his father's house closed against his approach. Perhaps, in the familiar circle, his name was never spoken. The memory of him awoke doubt, hesitation, and pain; until the Lord restored the wanderer, transformed, renewed; and then, instead of variance, love, and instead of heaviness, joy. I vex the godly among my kindred, a mother, a sister, by my sin; let Him lead me back to them, that their sorrows may be ended. "O Master, when Thou comest, there is a Sabbath in the house." Its troubles are cured. Its divisions and disgraces are forgotten.

And does He not call the laggard to his work? Now Matthew, *the Gift of God*, is to be Christ's servant and apostle and historian. Now he is to do the King's errands, and to publish the King's glorious name. Now he will write words of grace and mercy and peace, which will be read in every land and to the last of time. Change, stupendous change—is it not? Yet my feet also will run the way of God's commandments, when once the Good Physician has enlarged my heart. My voice will sound forth the loving-kindness of the Lord, when the Shepherd of lost sheep has snatched me from misery and death. From the refuse of mine and furnace modern chemistry can extract powerful acids and fragrant perfumes; and it is what the chemistry of heaven will do with the life I have squandered. In my sphere and degree, I shall be builder of the temple, evangelist of the good news, apostle of Jesus.

Say: Is there any miracle to equal this?

February 18.

GOD'S QUESTION PIERCES TO THE QUICK.

"*And He said unto him, What is thy name?*"—Gen. xxxii. 27.

THREE or four different truths must have been borne home to Jacob by a question so penetrating. There was his personal responsibility. It will be of no use to assert that he is the child of Abraham and Isaac: God is resolved to learn who and what he is himself. And there was his past sin. *What is thy name? And he said, Jacob*—Jacob, the supplanter, the deceiver, the cheat. It was not a pleasant answer to have extorted from him; but it carried in it the conviction of guilt which he sorely required. And there was his vaunting pride. At the very moment when "the Traveller unknown" wrestles with him, he is planning a fresh triumph for his cunning and skill; he must understand and hate himself more than he does. But there was his glorious opportunity also. Would the Stranger have asked for the open confession of his undesirable name, if He had not meant to blot it out and to give him a new name of honour and worth?

This is how God transacts with me in the most solemn seasons of my history.

Let me take the time of conversion. Then I have to master Jacob's lesson. That I stand alone, and that my ancestry and atmosphere will never save me. That my name is a synonym for foolishness, for self-will, for

unrighteousness towards my neighbour, for enmity against my God. That mine is the baseless dream of establishing my own title to life and blessedness, mine the strange imagination that I can dispense with the Father and the Saviour and the Spirit, mine a mischievous and infatuated pride. But now is the moment when hope is born, hope which trembles and yet which perseveres. I count it a token for good that God has brought me so near to Himself, and that He has unveiled my sin to my gaze. This, I say to my heart, must be the day of my merciful visitation, and the day of His power. And I will not let Him go.

Or let me think of the second conversion He grants me, when I have left my first love and my first works. Again I pass through the same discipline. He leads me out and away from others, it may be by the sharpness of trial, until I know that I stand alone with Him. He makes plain my failure and my disobedience. He discloses my unpardonable self-assurance—unpardonable except by His exceeding grace. My "cloud-capped towers" and "gorgeous palaces" are levelled with the ground. "Myself," I cry in shame, "Myself! my hollowest friend, my deadliest foe!" And yet He stirs in me the anticipation of revival; for why does He awaken my distaste with the past, if He does not intend to give me a nobler future? I wait for the morning. I refuse to loosen my grasp, until the Lord blesses me in deed and in truth.

His probing and unsparing knife is keen, but it is kindly too.

February 19.

MY QUESTION PLEASES AND CONQUERS GOD.

"*And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name.*"—GEN. xxxii. 29.

WHEN I offer this petition, self at length is obliterated and crucified. The patriarch gives no heed now to his own schemes, and hungers to be rid of his old bad past, and disregards even the new and transfigured title which his Assailant has bestowed—*Israel, a Prince with God.* He is face to face with a Personality vaster than his own, and before such Mightiness and such Mercy he is oblivous of himself. "Thy name, not mine": there is his quest. It is what takes place when I am lifted from death to life, and, again, when I am endowed with more purity and more consecration. I am denuded of the last shred and vestige of faith in myself. My pride fades into nothingness; it is shrivelled and killed by the touch of the holy Lord. He is my Alpha and my Omega to-day; and I—I am non-existent. But the more I cast away, the more I have.

For, when this is the prayer of the soul, trust in God grows vital and limitless. Jacob is ready to predicate anything of One Who has outwitted all his craft and baffled all his achievement. *Tell me Thy name*, he pleads—"it must be wonderful and incomparable; and to know it is my only wish." One night Bernard of Quintavalle heard Francis of Assisi pray; and

all that he said was this, "My God! My God!" "Thus saying and weeping, he abode till morning, repeating 'My God! My God!' and naught beside." And so it is when I am quickened and re-quickened. It is enough for me to muse on the divine excellence, enough that in the mere name of my Lord I have the promise of everything I need. He is my Refuge and Strength, my Sun and Shield, my Wisdom, my Righteousness, my Sanctification, my Redemption. More than all in Him I find.

And, when this is the heart's request, there is a victorious answer. In one sense God could not grant Jacob's petition; for what word, or what multitude of words, can sum up the boundlessness of His perfection? Yet I read, *And He blessed him there.* If the patriarch must remain to the end a student of the Name that is above every name, he has discovered at Peniel that He to Whom it belongs is His Forgiver and Redeemer and Father in heaven. And is this my certainty? Have I held Him fast, until I have obtained from Him as triumphant a response? As the day breaks on me red and golden in the east, has He yielded to my importunity and given me all my desire? Then I shall sing—

I know Thee, Saviour, who Thou art—
Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend!
Nor wilt Thou with the night depart,
But stay, and love me to the end.
Thy mercies never shall remove;
Thy Nature, and Thy Name, is Love.

February 20.

THE PERSPECTIVE GLASS.

"*By faith.*"—Heb. xi., *passim.*

FAITH, this inspiring and splendid chapter says, will dower me with the clearest insight. Let me have it in its simplicity; and the spiritual world will be nearer to me than the landscape around, or than the business which employs me day after day. God will be "at my elbow," to quote David Hume's testimony to John Brown of Haddington. His Word will be more engrossing than the newspaper or the share-list or the most exciting romance. Hell will yawn at my feet. Heaven will bend over my head. I shall not be content with what others report of these realities, as I must be content with what travellers write of Arabia and Tibet and New Guinea. I shall not give a formal and perfunctory assent to the assurances of the Bible regarding them. They will bulk larger than anything else. For faith is *the evidence of things not seen.*

Moreover, faith will create in me the strongest and most satisfying hope. It is like the "perspective glass," which the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains put into the hands of the Pilgrims, that with its aid they might discern some of the glory of the place to which they were journeying. There are elements in my salvation, and these amongst the best, which are retained for the future. Of many of my possessions I can say, "They are mine now"; of more of them I must bear witness,

"They will be mine soon." Increase of grace, the death that is robbed of its sting, the resurrection morning, the acquittal in the Day of Judgment, the full enjoying of God to all eternity: those are the sights I behold through the perspective glass from the top of the hill called Clear. Faith persuades and enables me to *seek after a country of my own.*

And faith will robe me in the noblest dress. *The elders*—Abel, and Enoch, and Abraham, and Moses, and Samuel, and the prophets; the holy men and gracious women of my own land, to whom I turn instinctively with admiration and reverence: whence all their white array? It was not of their own devising. Faith got it ready for them, and draped them in it, and brought them thus adorned into the presence of God. Mine be the trust of the sinner, who is ransomed from death by Christ's mercy alone; mine the trust of the saint, who draws his purity from above; mine the trust of the soldier, who wins God's battles and advances His cause, working righteousness and subduing kingdoms, by childlike dependence on the Arm stronger than his own. Then faith will give me, what it gave the elders, a fair mitre and *a good report.*

Plato has a fancy about a man who has grown to maturity in the dark underground, and who on a sudden is brought to the upper air to see the sun rise. There are no bounds to his astonishment. But familiarity with things magical and inscrutable has robbed me of humility and worship. Lord, show me the miracle of the sunrise and the wondrousness of faith!

February 21.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF GOODNESS?

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."—JOSH. xxiv. 15.

MY religion counts for nothing unless it is personal. *As for me*, Joshua says; he can bear an individual witness, and he glories in dedicating himself to an individual loyalty. There is indeed a noticeable singularity about all the most characteristic experiences of life in Christ; I cannot borrow one of them from anybody beside me; each is valueless and empty unless it is my very own. Regeneration, faith, penitence: from these a genuine Christianity starts; and of what worth are they if I do not myself, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, pass through their pains into the joy that succeeds? So it is, too, in after days. My growth in spiritual beauty and spiritual strength cannot be copied from my neighbour's growth; for I have my separate temperament which demands its separate sanctification. And my affection must be distinct no mere duplicate of some one else's allegiance: nay, let me, as Sir Thomas Browne counsels, "prove not a cloud but an asterisk in my region."

Yet my religion has little to commend it unless it is social too. *As for me and my house*, Joshua says. I am not to press on to the Celestial City in a selfish isolation. I am not to be monk, ascetic, recluse, concerned with my own pieties, and forgetting the claims of

the world without. I am to coax others into accompanying me to the roomy mansions of the Father's house. And especially, by the words I address to them, and the life I live before them, I must strive to win the members of my own family, until they are climbing the Hill of Holiness side by side with me. If I have "St. Paul's Perfection," Lord Bacon writes most wisely, "that I would wish to be Anathema from Christ for the salvation of my Brethren, it shews much of a divine Nature, and a kind of Conformity with Christ Himself."

And my religion will not be approved by the Judge unless it is active. *We will serve the Lord*, Joshua says. I must not be content with a vital and firm-set creed. I must not be satisfied with warm and irrepressible emotions. There are great tasks waiting to be performed, and I can carry them part of the way towards their completion. It is the Master's commandment that, so long as He lingers in the far country, I should till His fields and use His pounds. Therefore let me be up and doing, labouring without haste and without rest for the downfall of evil, for the dissemination of truth, for the perfecting of the saints, for the comforting of the weary, for the conversion of the sinful, for the honour of the King. "Myconius, reap!" Jesus said in a dream to His disciple in Gotha; and Myconius awoke, and, side by side with Luther and Melanchthon, thrust in his sickle.

Personal, social, active: I hope the significant adjectives depict my godliness.

February 22.

THE SHADOWS FALL APART.

"*Whereas I was blind, now I see.*"—JOHN ix. 25.

WHEN the old life passes, and the new life comes, it is as though another faculty of vision became mine. I walked among delusions and mistakes before; now at length I begin to see.

For instance, the dark realm of my own heart is an unsealed book to me. I realise that my sin has slain outright my strength, my hope, my life. When John Inglesant, in the story, looked into the astrologer's crystal, he saw a room, with a chimney of carved stone, and a high window at the end: and a man's figure lay before the hearth, and the hearth was stained with blood. It is what I am made cognisant of: the room of my nature, nobly proportioned, and built for great and holy things; but on the hearthstone I lie dead. I have destroyed myself, and God's law has uttered its doom against me, and I cannot find the way of escape either from His anger or from my shame. Nothing is surer than those truths, so sorrowful, so condemning.

But to my gaze the Cross of Christ presents itself too. It is not enough for me, with this purged eyesight of mine, to examine the theories of the Atonement which Christian thinkers have propounded, although I shall welcome every theory that has its source in a reverent mind and a loving soul. Golgotha is more than the centre of my creed; it is the secret of

my life and peace. Of the Lamb of God I shall say, *He loved me, and He gave Himself for me.* A day or two before his end, Dr. John Duncan told one of his friends, "I have been at the point of death, the point of death"; and then, raising himself, he added, "But I found that the one great mysterious death of Calvary was all that I needed at the point of death." This is my discovery, and few hours pass in which I do not behold and praise the Shepherd Who laid down His life for the sheep.

And the restraints and liberties of the service of God have dawned on me. Till the whole of my history is changed into "something rich and strange." Till I am prompted by heavenly motives as I move about the commonest tasks. Till it is a divine law I keep in the home, in the shop, in the field, everywhere. The thought of disobeying the Lord Who has bought me grows more and more hateful. The desire to please Him is with me at morning-break and through the livelong day. It is recorded of Wordsworth that an unfinished line saddened him, and that a word which was only second-best disturbed his thought. I have been led into a region, where anything undone or misdone for God is my burden and my pain.

Is it not as if the angel had anointed my unseeing eyes with euphrasy and rue, and so has opened to them an unimagined universe? Is it not as if I were blind Bartimæus, and, at the gate of Jericho town, Jesus of Nazareth lifts me from night to noon?

February 23.

A STRANGE AND GUILTY FORGETTING.

"*Beware lest . . . thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.*"—DEUT. viii. 27.

WHEN the goodly houses are built, and the flocks and the herds multiply, and the silver and gold have increased, I am in sorer peril than when I knew the "sweet content" of the poor. Prosperity may make me forget my dependence on the Giver of all. It may bring the haughty face and the heart which congratulates itself alone. It may steal from me the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which I wore in better days. But for my safe-keeping let me remember three things—

What I was once: that, first of all. Not long since, I was a forlorn slave in the land of Egypt, toiling in misery for hard taskmasters; and my life was bitter by reason of my bondage. And then I was a wayfarer among the sands and rocks of the wilderness; and sometimes the fiery serpents assailed me, and sometimes I had no water to assuage my thirst. If I am rich to day, I was destitute enough yesterday. If I am at home now, it is but a little while since I was in banishment. Let me pause and recollect, and my pride will be extinguished. It will keep me humble to turn back in thought to the pit whence I was digged.

And Who has made my condition and out-

look different: that, next. *The Lord my God*—to Him alone I owe the good land and large. He promised it to me, and amply He has fulfilled His promise. His strong arm smote my cruel oppressors, and led me wondrously out of the iron prison. His wise and liberal heart guided and fed me in the desert country. It is not I, my planning and my perseverance and my power;—it is Another, Who has *gotten me this wealth.* God in Jesus Christ "sought me wandering, set me right, turned my darkness into light." Not to myself but to His name let all the glory be given.

And what folly it is to be proud: that, also. Suppose that now He were to leave me to my own resources; that, having brought me to my inheritance, He should deem His duty done, and trust me to finish what He had inaugurated: how quickly my high towers would tumble to the ground, and my fruitful fields become a tangled thicket of briers and thorns! I can do nothing without His sustaining and enabling presence. I dare not relax my grasp on Him. If I boast that I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of no fresh succours and mercies, the stroke descends, and I am stripped and peeled.

So I had better be "a child in God's great house than the king of all the earth." Not to *my power and the might of mine hand* let anything be ascribed. My power is impotence. My hand is infirm and slack. To the Lord, Who goes forth as a mighty man, Who stirs up jealousy as a man of war, Who prevails against His enemies, I owe everything.

February 24.

HIS TOUCH RETAINS ITS ANCIENT POWER.

"*After that, He put His hands again upon his eyes.*"—MARK viii. 25.

THERE was no cold and supercilious patronage in Christ, when He bestowed His gifts. Those whom He healed were often unattractive and unlovely: their diseases and disfigurements made them repugnant to a sensitive spirit: but He did not hold aloof—He drew as near the sufferers as He possibly could. He loved to lay His hands on them, as well as to speak the word of power which released them from their distresses.

And I entreat Him to put His hands on me, even if my sin renders me sadly repellent to His untainted purity.

For they are the hands of the Good Physician. A curative virtue resides in them and thrills through their fingers. And what skill they possess to cool the burning fever, to extract the deadly poison, to end the fretting and corrupting leprosy! The world is deep in the debt of its patient and capable and unselfish doctors and surgeons; but Christ surpasses them all. His hands are prepared to fight the mortal malady of my sin, and to work my deliverance from its pollution and pain.

And they are the hands of the High Priest. When I look at them, I discover the scar which an old wound has left, the print of the nails; and I remember that He offered Himself a

sacrifice for my salvation. When I look at them again, I see that they are uplifted in intercession; and I know that He is my Advocate with the Father, an Advocate who "clears the culprit, pleads the desperate cause." I must not dispense with the priestly hands of my blessed Lord.

No less are they the hands of the Almighty King. It is not so long since, in this and other countries, the touch of a monarch was believed to banish certain ailments and to bring back health. It was a vain hope and a foolish fallacy. But, where the touch of the Lord of hosts is, there is power. Before it my most persistent and long-continued sickness of soul, the paralysis and the blindness of years, will fly discomfited. I rejoice that nothing is too hard for these sovereign hands to do.

Best of all, perhaps, they are the hands of the Heavenly Lover. Unutterable kindness resides in them and in Him Whose they are; let my unworthiness be what it may, there is no fear that He will despise me and cast me out. Through palm and fingers I feel the beat of the tenderest heart in the universe. For my sake it was broken in two on the Cross. For me it palpitates with an affection which I may rejoice in, but which in time and eternity I shall never fathom and fully understand.

Thou Helper of the helpless, I, too, would know the impact of Thy hands. It will recover me of my sickness. It will bring me back from the very verge of the grave. It will make me strong and pure.

February 25.

MY STEWARDSHIP.

"*Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness.*"—LUKE xvi. 9 (R.V.).

GINESTHE dokimoi trapezitai: it is one of the sayings which old tradition attributes to my Lord and Saviour—"Be ye good money-changers." And, though I do not find it recorded in the New Testament, it is quite in Christ's manner and style, and may well have been spoken by Him. It is a coin which bears the image and superscription of the heavenly mint and the gracious King.

Probably nothing tests my Christianity more shrewdly than the use to which I put my money. I sin if I hoard it, and I sin as assuredly if I fling it away in aimlessness and self-indulgence. I shall require the enlightenment and direction of the Holy Spirit, if I am to lay it out to the best account, and if I am to please my Master in the skies by the methods in which I expend it and the purposes I make it serve.

It may be little, or it may be much: but let me so employ it that my own truest welfare will be promoted. If I set my heart on its gain and acquisition, I am surrendering to the "sticks and straws and dust of the floor" the love and the zeal which are Christ's rightful property. Or if, when He gives it to me, I spend it for my comfort and aggrandisement alone, it drags me down instead of lifts me up. He entrusts me with it that, through its agency, my soul may grow in helpfulness and

compassion and likeness to Himself. I must beware that I do not disappoint Him.

It may be pence, or it may be pounds; but let me so employ it that my neighbours will be enriched. *By means of the mammon of unrighteousness* Jesus urges me to accumulate friends, who will receive me into everlasting habitations in the end of my day. Beside me in His church I see disciples, who abound in spiritual wealth, but who have a constant struggle to keep the gaunt wolf of want from the door. He bids me count it an honour and joy to sacrifice my resources, that I may dispel their anxious fears and brighten the cheerlessness of their homes.

It may be two mites, or ten thousand golden sovereigns; but let me so employ it that the Kingdom of God will march prospering, entering new provinces and winning more conspicuous triumphs. The missionary offering is never to be grudged. It is to be placed on the altar with a willing mind. My prayers are to go with it. My imagination is to follow it out and away to the ends of the world. It should be my sorrow that the gift is not greater. It should be my rejoicing that I can do anything for Him Who, though all was His, forsook His throne and His plenty, and became poor for me.

When He comes in His glory, He will ask me whether I have been a good money-changer. So, before He comes, I would remember —

> Few things there be I call my own to-day,
> And these be all—the things I gave away.

February 26.

BEHIND, ALL GLOOMY TO BEHOLD.

"*For we also were aforetime foolish.*"—Tit. iii. 3 (R.V.).

AFORETIME, says the apostle. It is a meaningful and peace-bringing adverb. It speaks of a period which is concluded, a book which is closed, an imprisonment that is only a memory, a death from which there has been a glorious resurrection.

Perhaps the change was a sudden thing. It was like an unexpected flash of lightning in the dark night, revealing in an instant to the traveller the whole of the features of the landscape. At once I saw the hatefulness of my sin, the evil and the misery of my unbelief, the hazard of my soul, the nearness and the righteousness of my Judge. At once I sought and found His pardon and mercy and unmerited favour. As if a man whom a hundred unrelenting enemies pursued should be carried in a happy moment to a cleft in a mighty rock, and then, instantaneously, the rock should open, and he should stand in a Paradise where never wind blew loudly.

Or perhaps the change came very gradually. It was like the advent of the day in my own temperate zone, the light asserting its strength and spreading its radiance more and more, until, lo, the shadows were altogether gone. God had kept speaking to me through my childhood, my youth, my riper years; now in warning, and then in commandment, and again in alluring invitation and promise; using

many instruments, refusing to be driven away, never despairing. And, at long length, His patience prevailed, and Christ led me in joyous captivity behind His chariot-wheels. The fortress, after so protracted a siege, opened its gates, and the true King entered in.

"Have you never a hill Mizar to remember?" asks the author of *Grace Abounding*. "Have you forgot the close, the milk-house, the stable, the barn, and the like, where God did visit your souls?" These are the heart's sacred and ineffaceable recollections: and, if they are mine, the mode which the superhuman change assumed will matter little. That it has revolutionised me: this is the main thing, whether the revolution was accomplished in one instant or was spread over many years. *Aforetime* I was foolish. But the kindness and the love of God my Saviour toward me, *toward me*, appeared. And, since then, life and death and eternity have all been transformed, and I am myself a new creation.

"Behind, all gloomy to behold." But, around me, a land of brooks of water and oil olive and honey. And, in front, the dew of Hermon falling upon the Hill of Zion, and the river bright as crystal, and the tree of life that bears its fruit every month.

For my distressed soul from death
Delivered was by Thee;
Thou didst my mourning eyes from tears,
My feet from falling free.

February 27.

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

"*I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.*"—Hag. ii. 7.

MANY unanswerable reasons present themselves why I should cherish a peculiar and especial delight in the Church of God.

For one thing, its scope is so great. Does it not embrace Jew and Gentile, black and white, slave and free? And where is it not at home? I go to the snow-wastes of Greenland, and I find that, after all, Hans Egede did not spend his strength for naught and in vain. I think of the hot sands of Africa, and I am sure that David Livingstone's dying intercessions will have an abundant response. In the coral islands of the Pacific, and in the crowded streets of London and New York, I hearken to the music of sanctuary bells. The Church witnesses to the wideness of God's mercy, to the limitless worth of Christ's death, and to the immeasurable powers of the Holy Ghost.

And its testimony is so effective. One redeemed soul, ablaze with faith and hope and love, will set other souls on fire. But the General Assembly and Church of the first-born: who will compute its members, and who will set forth its contagious and vitalising power? They are ten thousand times ten thousand. Only let them pulsate with zeal to serve God and men, and they must conquer the whole round earth. If the Christian society is failing

to do so, it is because it does not realise its own incalculable possibilities, and is not translating these into realities. It should have the loudest and most resistless of trumpet-calls.

And its work is so saving. It has a care for the bodies of men. It promotes their mental and intellectual growth. But it lives and labours, plans and prays, weeps and wrestles and perseveres, to quicken their undying spirits from death and sin. Within its walls multitudes are born into the family of the Father, and the immunities and liberties of the Kingdom of Heaven. Within them, too, multitudes more are led onward, gaining assurance of God's love, and peace of conscience, and increase of grace. The Church's benediction is spiritual, inward, restoring, healing, perfecting.

And then its blessedness is so lasting. Other commonwealths are undermined and totter into ruin. Other channels of help become parched and dry. On the gate of an American cemetery, where many are buried who fell on the Confederate side in the Civil War, is placed the line from Ovid, "*Qui bene pro patria cum patriaque jacent*—They lie nobly dead for their country and with their country." But the Church, with its worship and service and privilege, abides; and age cannot wither it. Its holiness and its joy on earth are prophecies of what awaits me on the other side of the River—the completer holiness and the more heart-filling joy which will be mine in the House of the Lord not made with hands. *There remaineth a Sabbatism for the people of God.*

Can I love the Church of Jesus Christ too dearly?

February 28.

A SACRIFICE OF RICHER BLOOD.

"If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord."—LEV. i. 2.

WHAT a variety of sacrifices God asked in the old time from the people of His possession! There was the burnt-offering, which betokened the consecration of the life to Him. There was the meal-offering, a promise in parable that the daily labour and energy and toil should be devoted to His praise. There was the peace-offering, emblem and symbol of the feast of salvation and friendship at which He sits down to eat and drink with men. There was the sin-offering, with its humbling message of the impossibility of nullifying the guilt of the soul, and of the absolute need of expiation. There was the trespass-offering, designed to convict the children of Israel of their fraudulence in depriving God and men of their dues, and to portray the penitence which heaven requires—a penitence which is restitution as well as confession. A variety of sacrifices, indeed! Continually the altars flamed and smoked. Continually the knife was raised, and the dumb, uncomplaining animal was slain. Continually the priests must mediate for the people and for themselves with the thrice-holy Lord.

I thank God that, in my New Testament day, there is but One Sacrifice, all-sufficing, acceptable, wanting in nothing—the sacrifice of Christ, both Victor and Victim.

Did He not make Himself a Burnt-Offering,

yielding His life to His Father, that in perfect submission and glad obedience He might keep the commandment I had broken and cast aside? Was He not by His own choice and will the true Meal-Offering, tasking Himself morning and noon and night in the service of God, and esteeming the task not a bondage but a boon? Is He not my Peace-Offering, without blemish, without compare?—for through Him I have the goodwill and tender love of the pure and heart-searching Lord; I sit down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit is sweet to my taste. Sin-Offering He is too, He Who is at once the blameless Lamb and the merciful and faithful High Priest, shedding His life-blood on the sacrificial Tree to atone for my evil; one drop of it effaces the blackest record—for the sake of one ruddy drop my condemnation is cancelled, and I have an unalterable pardon and an abiding rest. And, beyond doubt, Jesus Christ is the Trespass-Offering for my derelict soul, paying to the last farthing that awful debt which it could never pay, and bringing it out of the bankrupt's prison to citizenship and freedom and use and fame. In the end of the age God provides for me a many-coloured salvation, and a Saviour Whose infinitude of worth can never be told.

On His dear Head my faith would lay her trembling and appropriating hand. Simply to His Cross I cling, to His Cross and to Himself. He is all my boast; and, as Wesley's hymn phrases it, I "enjoy His glorious infamy."

February 29.

MY TO-MORROW IS TO UPLIFT MY TO-DAY.

"And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."—1 JOHN iii. 3 (R.V.).

WHEN the long march is over, and when the pilgrim's sleep through the quiet night has brought him rest, I shall awake and be satisfied.

The perfect heart is kept for me. A heart purged from every evil thought, every sullen temper, every unworthy desire. A heart which does not once wander from its Centre, and which is visited by no wish to wander. A heart conformed through and through to the will of God, and to the likeness of the unsinning Christ.

The complete life is reserved for me. Life that cannot be snapped and broken any more, with its purposes still unfulfilled. Life that will not again be deprived of those it loves with masterful tenderness: "the Patriarchs my fathers, the Saints my brothers, the Angels my friends: my wife, children, and kinsfolk, that are gone before me, and do attend me, looking and longing for my arriving." Life with its powers multiplied a hundredfold, and all these powers occupied in the work of God.

The sight of Jesus is the joy awaiting me. My hope is *set on Him*. I shall walk with Him, and talk with Him. I shall share His glory. With my own lips I shall tell Him how much I owe Him. With His own lips He will answer

me, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne.*

Those are some elements in the beauty and excellence of the inheritance towards which I am a traveller. I am emboldened to regard it as mine, because One Who is my Saviour and my Elder Brother has taken possession of it for me. In the days of heaven which come to me on earth, I have foretastes of its victory, its holiness, its peace ; and these whet my appetite for the banquet within the veil. But I would not miss the practical influence which such soul-filling prospects ought to wield over me. They are not accomplishing their proper mission unless they are purifying the whole circle of my beliefs, my motives, my decisions, my words, my activities. The anticipation of the world to come should be a constant and supreme incentive to patience, to separation and consecration, to courage and endurance, to seriousness and yet to gladness, in the world that now is. The poet delineates the grammarian of the Renaissance, who went on conjugating his Greek verbs with deliberate care. He refused to hurry, for haste would merely mar his work ; and had he not all eternity before him ? It is what I should feel : I have all eternity before me, and let me behave myself as an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ.

And thus the everlasting to-morrow will cast its light and glow across the evanescent to-day.

March.

Now there is set for Easter both
An altar and an altar-cloth ;
And the green field's become a board,
Whereto we sit with Christ our Lord.

For Jesus Christ our Lord is risen,
Hath burst the bonds of death His prison.
It is the Lord Christ's holiday,
Wherein His little ones may play.

On every side behold a Tree !
To-day we are not slaves but free,
And every little flower's a cup
To lift the blessed offering up.

Windflowers, within the brakes a-ring,
Call grateful hearts to worshipping ;
And many censers smoking please
The Lord God in His palaces.

On Good Friday the north wind blew,
And set the tender hearts to rue ;
The bitter wind from the dry east
Bade us to fast and not to feast.

Yet hear the lark in the dim skies,
" Christ is arisen, and I arise ! "
And hear a million choristers
In the green alleys make sweet prayers.

And see the daisies on the sod,
Where every lamb's a lamb of God.
His little ones that leap and run
Make Him the sweetest orison.

The stars upon the blackthorn blow,
And every orchard's white as snow.
The world's new-decked for Easter, both
An altar and an altar-cloth.

For Christ is risen and Death is dead,
And all the Powers o' the Dark dismayed,
And Life is bought with a great price:
The world's a smoke of sacrifice.

KATHARINE TYNAN.

THERE ARE THREE SUPPORTS TO FEED MY SOUL.

Convinced of my powerlessness to live the life of the disciple and servant and saint, I recall three mighty helps which God has provided for me.

The sincere milk of the Word *is one. Why do I not drink more deeply from the Book of books? Nothing is so wholesome, nothing so health-giving, as its teaching. I should inquire with diligence into its message. I should commit many of its verses to memory. I should ponder, and take to myself, its revelation of truth and duty and divine success. Far too frequently I am listless and indolent, when I am in the society of my Bible, and my thoughts go wandering far away. I must concentrate these wandering thoughts, and must give them tenseness and determination. If other voices call to me distractingly, I must bid them be silent. On my watch-tower I must wait, to hear what God will say to me. If I listen to Him as He speaks in the Scripture, thus perseveringly, thus resolutely, He will supply all my need.*

Evening, morning, and at noon will I pray: *it is a second effectual help. "The energised prayer of a righteous man is of great force," so Professor Rendel Harris translates a familiar assurance of the Epistle of James. Energised prayer: how shall I delineate it? It has God's glory for its great end. It is believing and expectant. It is like Abraham's prayer, when he pleaded for Sodom: and Jacob's, when he wrestled with the Angel and prevailed: and that of Moses on the hilltop over Rephidim: and that of Hannah, when her eyes were red with weeping. It resembles Saul's prayer in his agony at Damascus, and Paul's when he sought and sang in the prison at Philippi. It copies the strong crying and tears of my Lord Jesus Christ Himself. God bends and yields to such a violent man. He gives me all my desire.*

Let him take up his cross: *it is the third of these gracious and beneficent agencies. The cross may be a difficult duty. It may be a cramping sphere of life and work. It may be the call to forgive an enemy. It may be the shattering of my*

projects and the wounding of my loves. In every case it is something in which my natural heart has no pleasure. But let me lift it, and kiss it as I lay it on my shoulder; and it will prove a rich blessing. Sub pondere cresco: *I grow beneath the weight—it was the motto of a man whom John Graham of Claverhouse imprisoned on the Bass Rock; and his crest was a palm-tree, with two heavy loads hanging from it on either side, which yet lifted its green crown high into the serene air. Yes, yes, my heart, thou dost thrive and grow beneath the weight.*

The Word, the Prayer, the Cross: it is my daily rate for every day, all the days of my life.

March 1.

WHAT ONCE WERE GUESSED AS POINTS I NOW KNOW STARS.

"*That He should be made manifest.*"—JOHN i. 31.

MANIFEST: it is a favourite verb in the vocabulary of "great St. John," when he sets himself to unfold the healing and the peace and the power that Christ bestows.

There is the manifestation of Jesus in history. *That He should be made manifest*, the Baptist said, "He Who is the Bridegroom, and Whose shoe-lace I am not worthy to unloose, *therefore am I come.*" And to me, as to those crowds who hung on the forerunner's lips, the Lord is clearly revealed; the question now is one simply of my attitude to Him. A statesman wrote lately of the Crimean War, "The nation did the cheering, the soldiers did the dying, and nobody did the thinking." Doubtless I am prepared to applaud Christ;—ah! but am I prepared to think seriously of His claims? I see Him; have I confided in Him?

If I have, then there is the manifestation of Jesus in salvation. At the wedding in Cana, where the modest water saw its God and blushed, He *manifested His glory*, "and His disciples believed in Him." This faith—it is more than the acknowledgment of the intellect that He is mighty; it is the outgoing of the heart to Him in humility, in hunger, in hope. And I trust that for me He has transmuted

water into wine, quickening my life that was devoid of good into righteousness and true holiness. So I, too, shall witness for myself the glory of His power, and shall surrender all my being to Him.

And there is the manifestation of Jesus in friendship. I read that, after He had risen, He *manifested Himself again to His disciples at the Sea of Tiberias*, coming to them in the familiar spot, and making them understand that He would be with them all the days. I need to realise it better than I do : that He is a Helper in every place at every season. It was the counsel of a wise woman in a past generation, "Do not trouble people about your symptoms, physical or spiritual." But I should have no hesitation about troubling Christ with my symptoms, my aspirations, my lassitudes, my perplexities. He welcomes all such confidences, and He is eager to share with me my burden.

Deeper still, there is the manifestation of Jesus in secret. *I will love him*, He said in the Upper Room of the servant and friend who keeps His commandments, *and will manifest Myself to him.* When I receive His Holy Spirit, I receive the Trinity ; for the Spirit takes the Father's things and the Son's, and shows them to me. It means increasing light. It means deepening purity. It means strengthening assurance. Ignorance and evil and fear cannot remain to befog and defile and perturb him who holds Christ in his breast.

May much about Him, which lay exposed to me at the first, grow with the growth of my soul " of new significance and fresh result."

March 2.

WISE HEART IS WEALTHY HEART.

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom."—PROV. iv. 7.

THERE are many words used in the Book of Proverbs for the crowning and consummate good which I ought to seek. It is Wisdom. It is Understanding. It is Knowledge. It is Prudence. It is Subtilty. It is Instruction. It is Discretion. Must it not be a queenly quality which is diademed by such a multitude of august and regal names? And can I be too eager in my quest of it?

Mine is to be the trained intelligence, which discriminates rightly between things that differ, and which approves things that are excellent. It is possible for a man to hearken so habitually to conscience, to watch so sedulously God's ways in providence, and to dwell so much in the company of the divine Word, that scarcely ever will his judgment lead him astray. I would be this man.

Mine is to be the moral insight, the spiritual discernment, which detects and unmasks evil, whatever the specious dress which it assumes. There are disciples like the "true Florimell," whom Edmund Spenser pictures. When the false Florimell, formed of purest snow, but inhabited by a wicked spirit full of fawning guile, confronts them, the "enchanted damsell vanishes into naught." Such discipleship I crave and desire for my own.

Mine is to be the disposition that welcomes

any teaching, even the teaching of sorrow, which may familiarise me with the secrets of God. To be conformed to His stainlessness, to learn more adequately His love which chastens me only for my profit, to be moulded into fitness to do His will: these are the chief ends in life, and shall I not bless the discipline that conducts me to them? For such treasures no payment is too costly.

Mine is to be the quiet meditation, the sitting down to count the cost, the thought beforehand, that leads on to action which is decisive and beneficent. How little good is achieved, and how much harm may be wrought, by a nature that leaps into the breach rashly, impulsively, without consideration! If I am slower, I shall be more sure. I would do nothing until I pause to reflect. I would be less impetuous, and more patient and heedful.

And mine is to be the readiness to weigh everything in the shekels of the sanctuary, and to measure everything with the measuring-line of the Angel of the Covenant. Not what is pleasant to me, but what is glorifying to God: that I will choose. And round the natural world I shall see always the world spiritual and eternal. It is best for my brain and heart to move there, while my feet stay here—best for myself and for all whom I influence.

Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art the Wisdom of God. Create and foster in me this wisdom from above, pure and peaceable, full of mercy and good fruits.

March 3.

THE PSALM OF PLEASURES FOR EVERMORE.

"I am the Lord; that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another."—Isa. xlii. 8.

QUAINTLY and beautifully one has written of Henry Vaughan, the Silurist—one who has lived much with him, and who knows him well: "To read him is like coming alone to a village churchyard with trees, where the west is dying, in hues of lilac and rose, behind the low ivied Norman tower. The south windows are open, the young choir are within, and the organist, with many a hushed unconventional interlude of his own, is rehearsing with them the psalm of 'pleasures for evermore.'"

It seems to me as if Christ resembled this organist. With His choir—the souls He has loved so long, and bought with such a price, and rescued from a destruction so hopeless—He rehearses the psalm of *pleasures for evermore*. And O! that I may be a singer in the favoured company.

Soft and low the music begins. For I am *a bruised reed*, which He must be careful not to break; *a dimly burning wick*, whose flickering light may easily be quenched. So the melody is quiet, sober, chastened. Much of it is on a minor key, telling of my sin, and summoning me to penitence. But it has a piercing power. I listen, and I am melted, bowed into sorrow without being cast down

to despair. I listen, and tremble, and faint, and hope—venture humbly to hope that even for me there may be forgiveness and mercy and peace.

But louder and joyfuller the music becomes. It celebrates a Saviour Whose arm is mighty and Whose heart is kind. As I hearken, my unbelief is rebuked, and my alarms are quelled. Faith is born in my soul, faith in the strong Son of God and in His readiness to accomplish my deliverance. Ere I know, my blind eyes are opened; and the prisoner is out from his prison, past the great iron gates, and breathing the air of the free. Can I doubt that This is the Lord? Yes, *that is His name, and His glory will He not give to another.*

By and by the strain mounts higher still. *New things*, He says, *do I declare.* On earth, the possibilites of music are limited, for the octave has only so many tones and semitones, and the masters themselves cannot accomplish all they would. But there are no bounds to the harmonies and delights of the song of redemption. Here, more sinlessness, more intelligence, more strength to prevail in the evil day, more love for God and man, more skill and tenderness, more of the anointing of the Holy One. And hereafter, heaven, with the things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived—heaven, where

> One everlasting Sabbath there shall run
> Without succession and without a sun.

In simple truth, this is the psalm of *pleasures for evermore.*

March 4.

A HEARER WHO IS A DOER TOO.

"*Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*"—MATT. xiii. 9.

MY power of hearing may be marvellously accentuated and intensified. When God has been anxious to rouse the soul from the deep sleep of spiritual death, has He not sometimes compelled it to listen to audible voices from the Throne itself? When in later days He would dower it with a special and extraordinary blessing, has He not spoken to it, up in the third heaven, words too sacred to be repeated to the crowd? When its warfare is accomplished and it is going home to be with Him where He is, has He not permitted it to catch, while it tarried yet on earth, the sound and ravishment of the harpers harping with their harps in the Celestial City?

These enlargements of the bodily faculty are His work. But I, too, can help my sense of hearing to high attainments, and so make myself a stronger man.

I would hear, and keep. Nothing is easier than to listen to-day, it may be with emotion and tears, and to forget to-morrow. I would retain the messages of my Lord. What greater or more sacred task can I allot to memory than the task of storing in its chambers the priceless treasures of His truth? Then I shall have food in every season of famine, and a sword against the hour of battle.

I would hear, and meditate. Not merely

should I determine to conserve what I have been taught, but I should turn it over and over in mind and heart. It will grow grander thus, larger, more wonderful. It will clothe itself in brighter colours, and become instinct with new meaning and sweetness and force. I require no unwonted revelation; I only require insight into the sublimities of the revelation I have.

I would hear, and work. "God's words are things," Luther said; and I must do my part to translate them into things. Mrs. Browning described Cavour as "that noble soul who meditated and made Italy." I must both meditate and make. I must embody my thoughts in actions. It will give them an increased significance and a fuller vitality. It will double and treble their worth.

I would hear, and bear fruit. Often I have had deep and tender feeling as I hearkened to the commandments and invitations and encouragements of my Lord. But I have not passed beyond sentiment, and that has evaporated soon. Let me employ the gracious feeling, let me use the King's lessons, in educating the ignorant, in helping the helpless, in nursing the sick, in reclaiming the fallen.

This is how Jesus desires me to hear; and why should I refuse anything to Him Who deserves to have all my senses and endowments at their best? By His grace, I will translate His message into thought, into power, into toil, into the harvest and vintage for which He longs.

March 5.

THE LITTLE LESS, AND WHAT WORLDS AWAY!

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines."—SONG OF SONGS ii. 15.

A LITTLE fox may work irreparable havoc. *A little folly*, the Preacher says, *outweighs wisdom and honour*. Let me take the salutary admonitions to my heart.

There are faults of temper, which I call trivial, but which mar my good name and diminish woefully my power to serve God and my neighbour. It may be the critical spirit, which is quick to blame and unready to praise. It may be a certain narrowness of outlook, which can descry no good except in those whose statement of the truth coincides with my own, and whose Christianity is moulded after a pattern identical with mine. It may be the thoughtlessness, which leads me to inflict biting and rankling wounds simply through my failure to reflect. It may be the lack of tender and comprehending sympathy. Not one of these but is a dead and unlovely fly in the perfume of my character.

There are sins of speech, which seem venial, but which do a world of harm. As, for example, that gossip about others which is apt to end in disparagement and detraction. Or the insistence on my own qualities and achievements, which becomes a boastful egotism and an intolerable self-conceit. Or the tendency to exaggerate, that issues in the "lie which is

half a truth and ever the blackest of lies, for the lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright, but the lie which is half a truth is a harder matter to fight." Or the argumentativeness and disputation, which never welcome anything heartily, but must always have some doubt to suggest and some question to raise. Every one of them is injurious and bad.

There are habits of life I am accustomed to excuse, and God abhors them, and the evil they inflict may be incalculable. Let me fasten attention on one danger alone—the misuse of money. Perhaps I am penurious and hard; I will not loosen my purse-strings to aid my struggling brother and to hasten the coming of Christ's kingdom. Or, on the other hand, I am lax and remiss; I spend on myself the shillings and pounds which are not really mine, for I have debts not yet paid and obligations waiting to be met. And these destructive little foxes so spoil the vineyard of my life that the fruit it bears is scanty and meagre. People are deterred from my Master's salvation and the service of His kingdom, because I, who claim to be His representative, am so faulty and so frail.

In the heart of the forest a great tree falls with a sudden crash. What has occasioned its downfall? Not the merciless stroke of the lightning. Not the swift sharp edge of the woodman's axe. No, but some tiny insect which, bit by bit and hour after hour, has eaten the living core out of the tree. And shall I not beware?

March 6.

I KNOW HIM WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED.

"Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves."—JOHN IV. 42.

IT is beyond question that others may help me to believe. And therefore I think that Hermann, the wise and devout German teacher, writes too positively and uncompromisingly when he says: "We remain amid scholasticism, so long as we appropriate any other men's expressions of their redeemed life." I may be deeply indebted to the saints of God, the holy dead who speak to me from their books, the living who call to me appealingly by lip and by example. They tell me what they have found redemption to be; and I may lay hold of their definitions and commendations with so earnest a grasp that, for ever afterwards, these definitions and commendations shall be wrought into the texture of my own experience. A Christian neighbour, a Christian friend, a pilgrim who has trodden the King's Highway for a long time, or perhaps a disciple who entered it only a little while ago and who burns with the ardours of his first love: they may aid me most effectually towards the reception of salvation. They can render my convictions of sin truer and profounder. They can describe to me the modes in which the grace of God comes to the soul. They can unfold its meaning, and can emphasise its immeasurable worth.

But, after all, it is I myself who must believe. It is idle to fancy that I can exercise faith by proxy—idle and fatal to dream that I can delegate to some one else the responsibility of making Christ and His forgiveness and peace my own. Hermann speaks truly when he goes on: "The doctrines and thoughts of another man who is redeemed cannot redeem me." No, they never can. Not because of his saying, even if he is a St. Paul or a St. John, but because I have seen and heard Jesus the Lord for myself, because my empty hand has received and is receiving His unsearchable riches, because He is closer to me than breathing and dearer than my very life, am I a child of God and an heir of the kingdom. No report which the Indians carried of the mighty waters of the Pacific could have brought the wild surmise into the gaze of Cortez and his men, or could have thrilled their hearts with an unwonted rapture. They must themselves stand silent upon that peak in Darien. Their own eyes must wander amazed across the boundless fields of foam. Their own souls must wonder and know.

I am thankful for all that has been written in praise of Christ, and for all that my ears have heard of His peerlessness; but beyond the testimony I would pass into personal and intimate relationship with Himself. When I see Him thus directly, thus individually, self-abhorrence will be born, penitence, contrition, loathing and shame. But, after the night of weeping, ah, what a morning of consummate joy!

March 7.

A CONTINUAL ALLOWANCE GIVEN HIM OF THE KING.

"*Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.*"—JER. xv. 16.

HAVE I dealt as honestly and as seriously with my Bible as I should? Have I read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested its manifold teaching? Shakespeare, it has been said, is a friend of the hearth and the home, whom we know well, with whom we have laughed and wept, and in whose company we explore all life and thought and being. But God, speaking to me in the Book of books, should be a Friend yet more intimate and more quickening, and I ought never to quit His society.

There are different methods in which I may find and eat His words—so find them and eat them, that they will be a joy and the rejoicing of my heart.

The children's plan is a good one—the plan of committing the verses of Scripture to memory. God's most active and indefatigable saints have followed it. Long ago, Columba of Iona and his Culdee missionaries recited the Psalms wherever they went. In cottage and castle among the Alps, the Waldenses repeated the Gospels. The German Reformers, Luther and Melanchthon and the rest, knew every sentence in the Epistles of Paul. Let me perpetuate the gracious habit.

I shall find an abundant recompense, too, in the patient and diligent examination of separate books in the Bible. If I will read these twice, three times, many times, from their outset to their conclusion, I shall see their trend and movement, their spirit and temper, the victorious onflow of the River of God which is full of water; and the holy writings will take on new aspects to me.

Or I can choose and scrutinise the great healing and health-giving truths of the Word. St. James is the ethical preacher of the New Testament, and I need his bracing exposition of the duty demanded of me. St. Peter will expound the holiness of the Christian character. St. Paul will unfold the sinner's justification and the saint's mystical union with Christ.

Let me read with the sanctified imagination which gives verisimilitude to the page. Let me read with humble prayer. Let me read, seeking to lay aside every prepossession and prejudice. Let me read, applying the message to the circumstances and requirements of my own history. Let me read from the spiritual life which has already begun to beat and pulse within me, in order to the acquisition of a life that is ampler and loftier and more effective.

Then I shall mount up on eagles' wings, run and not be weary, walk and not faint. Surely, surely, I shall not omit what Tennyson calls "my daily range among the pleasant fields of Holy Writ."

March 8.

GOD'S FACE IS MY UNIVERSE.

"For neither from the east, nor from the west, nor yet from the south, cometh lifting up. But God is the judge."—Ps. lxxv. 6, 7 (R.V.).

I AM prone to look in wrong directions for the satisfaction of my nature. There is but one fortress and home where the heart is well content.

"Not from the East cometh lifting up. And the East, the Semitic world, the world too of India and other Asiatic lands, is a synonym for conservatism, for changelessness and fixity, for brooding meditativeness and contemplation. Centuries back, when "the Roman tempest swelled and swelled, and on her head was hurled,"

> The East bowed low before the blast,
> In patient deep disdain;
> She let the legions thunder past,
> And plunged in thought again.

So I may pride myself on my deep-settled beliefs and permanent convictions—the cardinal principles of creed and conduct from which I never swerve. But, let them be ever so praiseworthy, these are insufficient to secure my life and blessedness.

Nor from the West does promotion arise. The West is a hemisphere apart from the East, a moral and spiritual hemisphere. It is the chosen abode of progress and growth. It cannot stand still. Forgetting the things

which are behind, it reaches out and on to the things which are before. And that may be my temperament. I cannot rest in the former attainments of my intellectual faith or in the previous successes of my active career. I must leave the old landmarks, the old enthusiasms and achievements, for something sublimer still. But, with all my advance, I may remain poor.

Nor yet from the South does my strength spring. In the margin of the Revised Version it is, *From the wilderness of mountains.* The South is the scene of lonely strength, of towering majesty, of imposing grandeur. And I have moments and moods when I am lifted to the mountain-crests—seasons of special vision and of overpowering emotion. I move about in worlds which I cannot fully realise. I catch sight of truths, "that wake to perish never." But even those Pisgah and Horeb experiences do not quench all the thirsts of the soul.

God is the Judge. In His favour is life, and His loving-kindness is better than life. Suppose that His tribunal and law have vindicated me. Suppose that He has forgiven me. Suppose that, before the gleaming purity of His Throne, I, guilty once and condemned, am accepted now. Suppose that, by the Cross and Passion of His well-Beloved Son, He has passed sentence of death on my sin and has justified myself. Then I have all and abound. I sing, "The world is glad for Thee; the heart is glad for Thee; and all is well."

March 9.

BEYOND ALL ROMAN FAME.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Rom. i. 16.

NOT even in the capital of the world was Paul ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Not even when he was confronted with the pomp and pride of Nero Cæsar, was he less enamoured of his crucified and exalted Master. And he had no reason to be. More than ever, indeed, was he prepared to glory in Jesus his Lord.

For he saw that the power of Rome was based on iron force. Those inexorable and pitiless armies of the Empire, what does Tacitus say of them?—*Solitudinem faciunt: pacem appellant:* They make a solitude, and they call it peace. The land might be like the garden of Eden before them; behind them it was a desolate wilderness. But the Gospel gains its conquests, and captures its prisoners, by love—the ineffable love, the love of God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit, the love of which the Cross of Calvary with its matchless Sufferer is illustration and proof, the love which throws its blessed chains about my rebellious heart, and about ten thousand other hearts as cold and suspicious and hostile as mine.

And the apostle felt that the government of Rome was limited in extent. Wide-stretching as the Empire was in its palmy days, it had its definite geographical boundaries. If it reached to the Britons, "entirely divided from

the whole world," it went no farther. But the Gospel rings forth its good tidings in every language and to every race. Morven's heath and Jungfrau's snow, Burman vale and Siberian steppe and vine-terraced Palestine: nowhere is Christ an alien and a foreigner; nowhere does He find Himself in an environment with which He is out of sympathy, and from which He must retire discredited and beaten. From north and south and east and west the children of men press into His fold.

And Paul knew that the rule of Rome was temporary and fleeting. It stood intact for many centuries; but, when the bond-slave of Jesus lived in his own hired house not far from the golden palace of the Cæsars, the decay had already begun. The Empire was sapped by the unbelief, the superstition, the vice of its citizens. The Eternal City was not eternal. Soon "the idol fell down, and the world rose up free." But the Gospel grows younger and not older with the lapse of the ages. It is as precious and as puissant as it was in the early years, and it has won new voices and significances since then. Vitality and vigour will crown it, until the Lord gathers its trophies and its subjects home to Himself.

There are no surroundings in which I should be ashamed of it. In the twentieth century as in the first, it is the shepherd-lad David facing Goliath, with his five smooth stones in a leather sling. But, in all the centuries, it is David who conquers, and the giant totters to the ground, with the death-wound in his brow.

March 10.

LUX IN TENEBRIS.

"*It came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.*"—LUKE xxiv. 4.

THE angels in the sepulchre are emblem and evidence of the treasures which Jesus, dying and living again, bestows on me.

Here is buoyant life, where I expect impotence and lethargy and slumber. The angels are always young, always strong, always alert to do the Father's will. Nothing dulls the glow of their devotion. Nothing lessens the alacrities and energies of their souls. It is a symbol—is it not?—of that fulness of life with which Jesus, Who suffered for me and rose again, invests my heart, when all my trust is stayed on Him. The doom I merited is cancelled. The chains in which I lay are broken. A glorious liberty is mine. I am free and glad to run the way of God's commandments.

Here is good hope, where I expect despondency and gloom. The angels are strangers to despair. Even in a grave, their countenances are bright, and their message is one of courage and cheer. Like the virgin Una, they make a sunshine in a shady place. It is what Christ does for me. He has Himself emerged a Conqueror, and He dispels my sadnesses. There is much melancholy in the books and thinking of my time; men live under grey skies; they have neither joy nor certitude nor help for pain. But my Lord puts a new rapture

in my look and on my lips. Let me live in His fellowship, feeding on the bread of His truth, and claiming the comforts of His Spirit, and I shall be unvexed by "the ache of modernism."

Here is dazzling apparel, where I expect mourning weeds. The angels are robed in light. Every one of them is a king, and wears the dress of a king. Their garments are like themselves, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. It is a hint and indication of the beauty of character with which Christ adorns me, when I commit myself to His renewing hands, not once only, but each day and each hour. Whiter than the snow which crowns the Alp, whiter than the crest of the tumbling wave, whiter than the stainless petals of the lily, is the vesture in which His Holy Ghost clothes my unworthiness. I should set no limits to the sanctification He imparts.

Here is immortality, where I expect death. The angels taste neither frailty nor sickness nor pain. They do not die. Year after year, and cycle after cycle, they "see the smooth face of God," and catch its reflection, and the lapse of millenniums writes no wrinkle on their tranquil foreheads. Do they not visit the sepulchre, to chase its grimness away, and to assure me that, if Jesus is all my boast, I need have no fear of it, either for myself, or for my unforgotten dead who have gone down into it, confiding in Him? To them and to me He will be Resurrection and Life: and they who sleep for a little in the dust will awake and sing.

I am thankful for the angels: but I am much more thankful for Him of Whose better glory the angels speak to me.

March 11.

WHY TARRY THE WHEELS OF HIS CHARIOT?

"*Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence.*"—Ps. l. 3.

NINETEEN centuries have fled since the Lord ascended from Olivet; and He lingers still in the Heavenlies. Science, which is scarcely sure that He rose from His Syrian grave, makes light of the doctrine of His reappearance. There is a kind of Christianity which is half-ashamed of it: it leaves it, as something over-mystical and fantastic, to theologians and enthusiasts; it asks what influence a hope so nebulous can have in the ordinary life. I believe that the sceptical science and the prosaic Christianity are wrong.

And yet how shall I explain His long delay? If He is not to be silent always, why has He kept silence through one slow-moving epoch of time after another?

I ought to remember that His arithmetic is different from mine. Because I have a short and fleeting history, I am compelled to reckon everything in little numbers; and the near view suits me better than the far. But *a thousand years are with the Lord as one day.* In His calculations, therefore, two days have not quite passed, since the cloud carried Him from the wistful gaze of His apostles.

I ought to remember, also, that there are many subordinate comings of Christ. He came in blessing at Pentecost, when

flamed o'er all the thronging host
The baptism of the Holy Ghost ;

and in judgment, in the dark and tragic hour when Jerusalem fell. He comes in every true conversion, in every revival of religion, in every victory for the cause of righteousness and truth. And these lesser advents prepare the way of the greater. They are ushering it in. They are bringing it near.

I ought to remember, again, that my own death will set me before His face. If it befalls me before He appears in glory, it will bear my spirit in a moment into the sevenfold radiance of His presence ; on earth at one instant, I shall be with Christ the next. And I know not how soon or how suddenly death may knock at my door. It seldom sounds a trumpet to herald its approach.

And then, too, I ought to remember that, if the time of His personal return is veiled in clouds and mist, the fact of it is certain. The date is hidden, that my eyes may be always wakeful, my hands and feet always diligent, my heart always lifted in expectation. Before to-morrow's sunrise, He may rend His heavens and reveal Himself in His majesty ; and, my soul, thou wouldst not be ashamed before Him then—thou wouldst not have Him rebuke thee for indolence and unspirituality and fruitlessness.

"Only a few more shadows, and He will come." Perhaps His tarrying in the unseen draws towards its termination. Perhaps the end of the present order is closer than I suppose. Perhaps, instead of going down to the grave, I shall meet the Lord in the air.

March 12.

A WORLD OF STRIFE WITHOUT.

"*When the doors were shut.*"—JOHN XX. 19.

IF I am to meet with Christ, I must withdraw from foreign and hostile influences. I must "shut my door and bar them out, the turmoil, tedium, gadabout."

I must lock unbelief outside. Priest, Sadducee, Pharisee, doctors and scribes: they were not welcomed to the Upper Room, for they had no personal faith in Jesus. I may not scout His pretensions as scornfully as they did; but what if I am content to dispense with Him? what if I have no conviction of spiritual poverty? what if I have never stretched out an empty and hungry hand to welcome a Redeemer of my very own? Christ remains a stranger to the unbelieving spirit.

And I must exclude and expel formalism. The Jews, on the wrong side of these closed doors, were pedants and precisians in their worship. Not a sacrifice was omitted, not a farthing of the Temple tribute, not a detail in the elaborate ritual. But there was no warm soul under the careful service. And my Christianity may be as "icily regular," a mechanism, a well-ordered routine. It has no tears, no fervours, no divine powers. It is dead. Where the vital wind does not blow, Jesus is absent.

And I must bid worldliness stay without. The men of Israel in our Lord's time were intensely secular. They did not see the Throne

high and lifted up. They were absorbed by the opportunities and ambitions of the present. But can I afford to judge them severely? The world of profit and loss, of getting and spending, may wield so masterful a spell over me that the world of God and the soul is clean blotted out of my remembrance. Christ stands overlooked, neglected, forgotten.

Moreover, I must compel unbrotherliness to stand without the gate. Was not Palestine honeycombed by suspicions and feuds? Sect wrangled with sect. Class disliked class. Bickerings, jealousies, disputes, heart-burnings: these I must lay aside. The Holy Ghost never gives His blessing where there are disunion and turmoil. The Prince of Peace will not reside in the soul which harbours a single enmity, and which insists perpetually and selfishly on having its own way.

And, in fine, I must say good-bye to preoccupation of every kind. Jerusalem did not fairly and earnestly study Jesus. It had too many other interests. Its mind and its life were full, and there was no room for Him. I may have so much to do in the externalities of His kingdom, words to speak, errands to run, enterprises to assist, that I have no leisure to sit down and commune with Himself. But my eyes must be "homes of silent prayer"; and in the silence He will draw close to me.

Yes, let everything go that would hold Him at a distance. For there is none to equal Him. And mine are vacant rooms till He fills them.

March 13.

A WORLD OF LOVE WITHIN.

"*Jesus came, and stood in the midst.*"—JOHN XX. 19.

THE room was filled with the odour of His presence, and not the room only, but each disciple's heart.

When the doors are closed against intruders and aliens, I receive the salvation of Christ. What did He do, standing suddenly and royally amongst His comrades? *He shewed unto them His hands and His side*—the hands which the rough nails had scarred, the side into which the soldier had thrust the spear. These wounds are certificates and guarantees of my redemption. They are the costly price paid for my pardon. Only let me get alone with Him, only let the eyes of my faith dwell on His sorrow and love, and my burden of guilt will be gone, and I shall be at home in the Father's house.

And when the doors are closed against everything that defiles and disturbs, I enter into the rest of Christ. What did He say as He stood in the midst? *He saith unto them, Peace be unto you!* It is more than forgiveness. It is the assurance of God's love. It is intimacy of fellowship with Him. It is the conscience that has ceased to accuse, and the heart that has learned the secret of satisfaction. It is victory over depression, over affliction, over temptation. When I turn from all that hinders, this is what Jesus sends to me in exchange. How infinite is my gain!

And when the doors are closed against the evil powers, I am ready to be lifted to the beneficence of Christ. What did He go on to tell His friends? *As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.* So I am not only to be a receiver of His bounty; I am to be a giver to a necessitous world, and a giver after His sublime type. I am to prolong his mission and His labour. It is work archangels might desire, cherubim who know and seraphim who burn. But how can I ever accomplish it effectually, unless I cultivate the friendliest companionship with my Master, and sit at His feet?

And, to sum up all, when the doors are closed on my sins and my foes, I am filled with the fulness of Christ. What more did He grant these favoured souls? *He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* It is illumination; so that the truth becomes to me significant and precious. It is sensitiveness to sin; so that I detect and shrink from its stealthiest approach. It is consecration; so that I burn with zeal for the honour of Jesus and for the conversion of men. It is authority and power; so that my words bind or loose, and are a savour of death unto death or of life unto life. These superhuman endowments are mine, when my Lord abides with me.

Is it not most good, to listen to Him when the doors are shut? I come forth larger, wiser, saintlier, more victorious. Now it is not I who live, but Christ Who lives in me.

March 14.

FROM MARAH TO ELIM IS ONLY A MORNING'S MARCH.

"And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees: and they encamped there by the waters."—Ex. xv. 27.

IF I did not make the acquaintance of the desert, I could not know the refreshment of Elim. If I did not taste the bitterness of Marah, the pleasanter waters would lose half of their delightsomeness. Therefore I should thank God for the trying march and the keen affliction. "Faith," says Samuel Rutherfurd, "is the better of the free air, and of the sharp winter storm in its face."

Elim brings supply. The oasis has its twelve wells, one for each of the tribes in Israel. And if I am journeying under His leadership, in fellowship with His people, towards His promised land, how many are the aids, and how varied is the provision, with which the King of the way furnishes me! The Sabbath comes week by week. The Word of life and peace is in my hands. I have the Throne of my Lord, to which I can repair in all my times of need. There are Sacramental seasons, and halcyon days of peculiar privilege, and conversations with Christian friends; "angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears, the sound of glory ringing in my ears." Never should I be without the living water.

Elim brings shadow. Above the wells rise straight and stately the palm-trees — threescore and ten of them, as many as the threescore and ten years of man's life on earth. They come between me and the blazing and remorseless glare of the sun. They secure for me a welcome coolness and revival. And the God of my redemption is a shadow from the heat. Shelter from the just condemnation of my sin, shelter from the cruel onslaught of temptation, shelter from the souring and hardening effects of sorrow, a screen and a deliverance in every emergency of youth and of age, mercy to pardon and grace to help: there is none of them which I may not discover in Him.

And so Elim ought to bring rest. *They encamped there by the waters*, and I should do likewise. Let it be that the desert stretches on every hand, that to-morrow I shall be in the sun once more, that the end of my travel is not yet. I have the cheering memory of God's supply and God's shadow to solace me. Nay, in the life of the soul, I can take my Elim with me through the great wilderness, and I need never lack the "twelve sweet wells of water and palms threescore and ten." There will be something much amiss, if ever my heart ceases to be quiet and confident, and if ever I forget to raise the song that tells of "rest beneath the palm-tree and joy beside the well."

In the pilgrim lot hardship may not be avoided. But when it is lustred and relieved by such compensations, what is it but benediction?

March 15.

A GOOD ENDING, BUT A BAD ROAD.

"Shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand?"—2 SAM. iv. 11.

IN the book of God's unchangeable purposes it was written that David should reign over all the land of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and from the blue mountains of Moab to the blue waters of the Mediterranean. But God, who is taintless and holy, never intended that the goal should be attained by the road of treachery and blood. And David did well to punish those who helped him by these unlawful methods.

Far too frequently, in the larger history of the world and the church, and in the smaller history of the individual soul, a good end has been sought by bad means. I must be watchful not only of the issues I desire to reach, but of the paths I select to conduct me to them: watchful and prayerful too, that, whatever record leap to light, I never shall be shamed.

No one is permitted to advance the kingdom of righteousness and truth, by subjecting to disabilities and penalties those who seem to be opposed to it. Many a time in the past the persecutor has imagined, and has proclaimed, that he was doing God service, when he had recourse to prison and torture, the rack and the amphitheatre and the stake. But Henry of Valois commits a grievous wrong when he seeks to coerce Bernard Palissy, and John Calvin should never have dealt so

mercilessly with Michael Servetus. The Father is kind even with the unthankful.

No one honours conscience and its divine King by concealing or contradicting the fact of things, in order to benefit his party or his friend. Casuists have often asked whether a lie is not in certain circumstances a pardonable offence, perhaps a beautiful and praiseworthy virtue. Unquestionably it is very hard, in the painful crises of life, to be wholly straightforward and honest; it is more than hard —it is an agony and a heartbreak. Yet, if I am called to speak, I had best abide by the plain reality. "His Yea was Yea, and careful all; his Nay was Nay beyond recall."

And no one acts wisely, or trustfully, or as the heavenly Lord would have him do, who hastens to a desirable result more rapidly than God does. His dealings may be puzzling and vexing to me; for He does not regulate His movements by the minute-hand of my watch, but by the stars in their courses. Yet let me leave Him to settle the troublesome problem of Ishbosheth, and to secure the throne and sceptre for the man for whom He has designed them. If He never is before the fitting hour, He never is behind. And when His activity begins, who shall let it?

I would be in love not merely with His ends but with His means. In all His ways of procedure, even those of them which are inexplicable to my reason and unpalatable to my heart, I would acquiesce without a rebellious murmur. He will justify Himself ere long.

March 16.

LET APE AND TIGER DIE.

"With authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him."—MARK i. 27.

NO word of the Gospel sounds more gladsomely in my ears than this. For *the unclean spirits* have invaded the citadel of my soul, and defiled it, and asserted their hateful domination over all my powers. I have no strength to drive them out; but, my Lord, Thou canst rescue me from their hideous craft and polluting bondage. Every deadly sin, as John Tauler said, causes Thy precious blood to be shed afresh, so that spiritually Thou art crucified many times each day. But every deadly sin, I bless God, may be defeated by the virtue of Thy Cross and the omnipotence of Thy Spirit.

There is what Dante calls the hungry lion of Pride. I claim a false superiority. I exalt myself arrogantly and unreasonably. Never am I satisfied. Never am I content with the honour I receive. Always I am clamouring for more, and more, and more. It is so, on the common levels of my daily life among my fellow-men; and it is so, even when I am standing before God. I dare, before His pure and searching tribunal, to cherish my lofty thoughts. I tell Him in effect that I do not need Him and His salvation. I will not humble my soul to accept, as an undeserving sinner, the pardon He provides. Lord Jesus Christ, abase Thou this demon of Pride.

There is what Dante calls the spotted panther of Sensuality. It is not simply in my hot youth that I give harbourage to corrupting imaginations, which sink me beneath my true dignity. They are horribly persistent. They follow me into my riper age. Again and again they reappear, like the dragon's teeth in the Greek fable springing up in the form of armed men. A story in the newspaper makes them recur, or a too suggestive picture, or an impure word which I overhear as I hurry along the street. Wrestle, O Christ, with the spotted panther in me, and kill him outright. Forsake me not, until my hidden thoughts are as sinless as Thine own.

And there is what Dante calls the famished wolf of Covetousness. I crave money, crave it with a hunger which refuses to be appeased. If I have managed to secure a little gain, and am of some account in the social sphere, I am full of eagerness to assure my position and to add to my store. If I am poor, I am discontented, and for ever scheming and toiling to better myself. Lord Jesus, when Thou wast here, Thou hadst nothing of the world's riches, and yet Thy heart lacked for no good thing. Without wallet or purse, Thou wast crowned with the love of the Father and the fulness of the Spirit. Teach me Thy secret, and let the wolf be slain too.

Thou art all I want. Come to me, and dwell patiently and victoriously within me, till I am holy as Thou art holy. Then, instead of lodging the lion and the panther and the wolf, and many another unclean and loathly beast, I shall be conformed to the Lamb and the Dove.

March 17.

THE CREED OF CREEDS.

"He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection."—Acts xvii. 18.

THEY were Epicureans and Stoics, the sages and moralists of Athens, to whom St. Paul unfolded his strange new teaching. And no men stood more in need of the message. Had they believed it, it would have lifted them out of twilight into noonday.

He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection: there is a contrast here between some false views of God and the truest view of Him. The Epicurean said: "God, if there is a God at all, is careless about the world. He lives far off, in the lucid interspaces which divide star from star. He looks unmoved on flaming towns and sinking ships and praying hands." The Stoic said: "God is resistless Force and unalterable Law. If He has any personal being apart from the universe, He has no tender heart. Strong He is, and inexorable, and I may not influence Him." But I hearken to Paul's Gospel, and see God in Jesus; and I am convinced that He knows me by name, and that no one loves me with such intensity as He. He has come down from distance and regardlessness. He has embraced a malefactor's Cross in my room and for my redemption.

He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection: there is a contrast here between some imperfect views of life and the completest

view of it. The Epicurean said: "Life is happiness and pleasure. He lives most and best who gains from his existence most sweetness and joy, and who wears habitually a glorious morning face." The Stoic said: "Life is duty—duty to be pursued and chosen in its sternnesses and rigours no less than in its delights, duty to be obeyed at whatever cost." But I yield my heart's trust to the Jesus Whom Paul publishes and commends; and I have discovered the pleasure to which no speck of unworthiness adheres; and for me duty has been refined and exalted into the will of my perfect Lord—it has become warm, vital, persuasive.

He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection: there is a contrast here between some cheerless views of the future and the brightest view of it. Neither Epicurean nor Stoic had anything to say with assurance and certitude about the world on the farther side of the grave; they groped amongst peradventures and doubts; probably most of them, like the modern poet, would have thanked whatever gods there be that no life lives for ever, and that love deep as the sea as a rose must wither—"as the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose." But I look to Jesus, Paul's Boast and Crown; and I have from Him a hope that never will be put to shame. He died once, and lives eternally; and in His eternity I, His little one, will share. In the city which cannot be shaken He keeps a place for me.

The princes in philosophy walked in haze and gloom; but the humblest disciple of Christ dwells in the light that never was on sea or land.

March 18.

GOD'S ROD IS DIPPED IN HONEY.

"*For I know that my Redeemer liveth.*"—JOB XIX. 25.

EVEN while the tempests were beating on his head, Job had glimpses of the argosies which wind and wave were bearing towards him. Not always indeed, but at his best moments, he understood and confessed that it was good to be afflicted; he laid aside his querulousness; he had a song in the midnight and the prison.

One thing he was learning was that "there is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than up in heaven." Not by chance, he knew, was he out under those frowning skies, with the rain falling and the thunder pealing. God had foreseen his anguish, had permitted it, was commanding and limiting it. And to be sure that His hand guides all, though I cannot meantime explain why the hand smites me and does not spare: there is a comfort here which words cannot utter.

And little by little he was discovering that he was tried for a purpose, that his faith might be strengthened and his godliness matured. It was not a storm which no one guided; and the pains and losses were not aimless, capricious, unmeaning. The ripest fruit grows against the roughest wall: and I am sent into the midst of griefs and blows and tears that my nature may win a new mellowness and power.

By and by he would be happy in this, too, that his affliction left him with higher and more

adequate thoughts of his God and with lowlier and more clear-sighted thoughts of himself. As never before, his eyes saw his Lord, and he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. And shall I not be grateful for the discipline which melts me into humility—me with my haughty heart and my self-reliant looks?

It was another element in his reward that he became a partaker in the sufferings of Christ. He was set a-dreaming, in those long days and longer nights, dimly it may be, and yet earnestly and yearningly, of his Redeemer, his Vindicator, his Goel. He, God's son with many shortcomings, was a forerunner of God's perfect Son. If I take up my cross, I walk in company with Jesus, my Elder Brother, along His Sorrowful Way.

And, through his trials, hope was born, and he had visions of the glory yet to be revealed. *After my skin hath been destroyed*, he said, *yet from my flesh shall I see God.* Does not tribulation in the present add zest to my expectancy of the unruffled future? After the frosts of winter, summer is good—the summer which never will give place to ice and snow any more. Had I not been buffeted and weather-beaten, my heaven had forfeited some of its joy and peace.

Wherefore, all is right which seems most wrong, if it be His sweet will. The night has its stars, and it will be followed by the break of day.

March 19.

TARRY THE LORD'S LEISURE.

"*And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.*"—LUKE ii. 51.

IF ever there was any one who might safely have taken his own way, it was Jesus Christ. But none lived in completer dependence on God. The thirty years in the quietness of Nazareth: it was a long time to pass before the Saviour entered on His ministry. If He had been as impatient as I am, He would have thrust in His sickle to the white harvest, He would have hurried to the rescue of the sheep scattered abroad, He would have finished God's work given Him to do. But season followed season in the little Galilean town. Christ grew from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood. And still He waited, calmly, without a complaint, without a question. The Father's hour, which was His own hour, was not yet come.

I must be ready to wait. And if mine is an ardent temperament, a compassionate soul, a zealous spirit, waiting is far from easy. I see much that requires to be done. I know that the time is short. I mourn that the enemy is coming in like a flood. I am tempted to do what the old king of Israel did: to force myself, and to assume the task of God's priest, and to present the burnt-offering. It is a generous and beautiful forwardness, and probably the church would be better for more of it. But there are dangers which beset the

sanguine and impulsive soul. There is a sad possibility of running before I have been sent.

Some day the probation will be complete. Some day the divine call will sound in the inner ear. Some day there will be a clear indication of God's providence, or an irresistible summons of God's Spirit, which will turn my face away from Nazareth, and send me to the Jordan to be baptized for my ministry. And then the heavens will be opened, and an unmistakable benediction will be granted me. Are they not the best workers, have they not most of the Father's favour and the Father's power attending them, who have used well the time of waiting? See how their self-will has been subdued in this school, and how they are humble and trustful. See how they have had opportunity to study the truth, to grow mighty in the Scriptures, to become scribes instructed in the laws and principles and privileges of the Kingdom. See how their character has a compactness, a hardihood, a perseverance, which it would have lacked if they had gone out to speak and toil while their faith was crude and callow.

Mr. Lowell tells of a young Federal officer who, in the sulphurous hostile lines, "plucked heart's-ease and not rue." In the Nazareth of waiting, though it may seem hostile and not friendly, I gather benefits inestimable. And when God's appointed moment for the commencement of my mission arrives at length, I am fitted for my Master's use.

March 20.

WHERE SIN ABOUNDS, GRACE MUCH MORE ABOUNDS.

"*I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins.*"—Isa. xliii. 25.

HOW many-sided is the evil of my heart and life! I am chargeable with *transgression*. For I have overstepped those boundaries which God has marked out for me, in the arrangements of His providence, in the precepts of His Book, in the counsels of Christian friends, in the example of Jesus, in the warnings and importunities and invitations of the Holy Spirit. I have broken down all the fences by which my rightful King sought to hedge me in from disloyalty and disobedience. I have climbed across the stile into Bypath Meadow. And I am chargeable, as certainly, with *sin*. For have I not missed the true end of my life? Made to glorify and to enjoy God, I have forgotten Him. "Thou hast set up many candlesticks and kindled many lamps in me," John Donne confesses; "but I have either blown them out, or carried them to guide me in forbidden ways." The same thanklessness is mine.

But how rich and various and prevailing is the grace of God! He *blotteth out* my transgressions—cancels and obliterates their dark and damning record. He *will not remember* my sins: not only is their sentence reversed and the black catalogue which enumerated

them gone, but their very recollection is to fade from the memory of the Judge; they will come into His mind no more for ever. He does it all most righteously, for the sake of the Saviour, Who has endured my doom and purchased my ransom. Looking to Him, I pray John Donne's prayer—

> O strong Ram, which has batter'd Heaven for me,
> Mild Lamb, which with Thy blood has mark'd the path,
> Bright Torch, which shin'st that I the way may see—
> O, with Thy own blood quench Thy own just wrath!

And what a necessity of love urges God to forgive! He finds nothing in me to elicit His restoring mercy, and everything to draw forth His penalty and frown. But He has to reckon with His nature no less than with mine; and from that nature pardons and cures flow as spontaneously and unavoidably as water from the fountain and fragrance from the flower. *For Mine own sake*, He says, "I blot out and refuse to remember." He will contradict Himself, He will run counter to the goodness which has prompted Him always from His unbeginning past, He will uproot and overturn the very foundations of His soul, if He rejects a single transgressor, or denies the poor sinner's cry, *Lord, save me, for I perish.*

To such a God I flee in my guiltiness and misery. When one entered the gates of old Mycenæ, the burdens of debt, the disabilities, the harassments, were left outside; and, passing under God's gates, I become His free man.

March 21.

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER.

"*They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.*"—AMOS vi. 6.

HIS unbrotherly brothers cast Joseph into the deep dark pit, and themselves sat down to eat bread, careless of his agony and anxious only for their own comfort. It is an ugly callousness and an inexcusable self-indulgence. Let me pray that I may be kept from a heart so impervious and unkind.

In the isolation of his dungeon, Joseph knew the pangs of a hungry body. He was cut off from every source of supply. He had neither bread to eat nor water to drink. Soon he must have perished of want. And do I not see physical necessity and outward poverty, wherever I choose to turn? In the midst of the wealth and plenty of my favoured land, there are hundreds of starving men; there are "wives and mithers maist despairin'"; there is a great army of ill-fed and ill-clad little children, who have scarcely one of the joys of childhood to gladden their lot. Folly and sin may be responsible for much of the destitution; but that will not justify me in holding back my help. I must deliver the poor that cry.

Down in the gloom of his prison, Joseph felt the forebodings of a sorrowful mind. The bright sky of his happy boyhood—how quickly and how ominously it had been overcast! And what fresh humiliations and tortures might await him still! Perhaps there was to be no

more liberty for him. Perhaps he must die among the shadows of the pit. And am I not familiar with some who carry in themselves the burden of a fearful spirit? They are never free from solicitudes and questionings, it may be about the practical difficulties of life, it may be about the theoretical mysteries of the truth. Do not let me leave them among damps and chills and dreads. If I cannot answer all their queries and dissipate all their pains, let me assure them of my sympathy. And so let me draw them out and up to the air and the sun.

A captive in the dreary place, Joseph was overtaken by the distresses of a troubled soul. Doubtless he wondered whether God had forgotten him now. He asked himself what meaning those dreams could have had, which he imagined once to have come from heaven. It might be, he told his heart, that his Lord had ceased to be gracious. It is the sorest of all griefs; and it will be strange if I cannot remember one here and another there who suffer from it. They weep in secret. They are afraid that they are castaways from divine mercy and grace. They write the bitterest indictment against themselves. O, what a crime it will be if I, eating the bread and drinking the wine of salvation, do not point them to the Cross and the Christ!

Yes, woe to them that are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph! The hunger of the body, the sorrow of the mind, the distress of the soul, must never call to me in vain. They are swords to slay my selfishness. They are keys to unlock my heart.

March 22.

IF I FORGET THEE, JERUSALEM!

"*Behave as citizens worthily of the gospel of Christ.*"—PHIL. i. 27 (R.V. marg.).

IT did not matter to the townsfolk of Philippi that seas and mountains separated them from the Imperial city on the Tiber. The thought of it was always present, to restrain and constrain. Many of the children of Britain live in distant dependencies and colonies. But they cannot forget the homeland. Their hearts are entwined about its persons and scenes. They pray and work for its welfare. There is pathos in the young officer's grave; for he fell far off on the Indian frontier. But there is glory too—"*Sed miles, sed pro patria*": did he not fight and die as a soldier should, and in defence of his country?

I, on whom God has set His heart, for whom the blood of His Son has been shed, in whom His Spirit has taken up His abode; I have a worthier citizenship than that of Rome or than that of Britain. I am a townsman of the Kingdom of Heaven. The recollection of it ought to move me profoundly and perpetually.

It should keep me grateful. Was it not with a great price that I obtained this freedom—a price which I did not myself pay, and which I never could have paid? Through the death of Christ, my Saviour, I enter the city. His shameful Cross is the charter of my enfranchisement and the pledge of my liberties. All to

Him I owe ; and it will be mournful if I do not thank Him from a full heart.

It should keep me holy. About the members of such a commonwealth, unearthly, superhuman, there must be a certain lofty scorn of whatever is base and sinful. *Worthily of the gospel of Christ* I am to live, myself a commentary on its purity and truth. What fellowship can I have with the unfruitful works of darkness? How blameless and how harmless I ought to be!

And it should keep me prayerful and diligent. There are tasks to be done for the City of God. Many of its enterprises are still unfulfilled. Many of its subjects are still outside its walls. Weak as I am, I can plead for its prosperity. Humble as I am, I can labour to build it up. "Here and here did England help me ; how can I help England?" It should be my continual question : Here and here has Christ helped me, and how can I help Christ?

Citizenship in heaven is not exclusively a thing of the future. If ever it is to be mine then, it must be mine now, in this lower world. Daily I ought to be admonished and hallowed by my relationship with the realm of God. Daily I ought to demean myself as His coadjutor and child. If I "must be free or die, who speak the tongue which Shakespeare spoke, the faith and morals hold which Milton held," yet stronger motives move me, yet mightier obligations rest on me, because I am a dweller in the Holy Land of the King of kings.

March 23.

THE BURDENS OF CITIZENSHIP.

"Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."—PHIL. i. 27.

SO the citizen of Christ's empire must welcome the responsibilities which His citizenship brings.

I am summoned to steady endurance. "Stand fast, Craigellachie!"—it was the battle-cry of one of the Highland clans; and it is St. Paul's battle-cry. There are times when the cry depicts the utmost I can render, and when my bravery and long-suffering and loyalty are taxed to render even this. It is perhaps my own spirituality which is assailed. A temptation, fierce and cunning, threatens to carry me off my feet. Then it demands all my resolution, and all the succours of the Holy Ghost, to prevent me from surrendering to the enemy. Or it is my Lord's religion and my Lord's cause which are censured and condemned; and it is hard to abide by my post and to refuse to desert the camp. But my King expects me to *stand fast*. I am to guard the beleaguered fortress. Like the sentry in Pompeii, I am to keep my trust, though the smoke is blinding, though the hot ashes rain down on me, though death stares me in the face.

I am summoned, also, to unity. *In one spirit* and *with one mind* the campaign is to be waged. Is it not madness for believing men to dissipate their energies in internal conflict, when they should be reserving all these energies for their

Master's foes? Let me conserve my individual beliefs, and count them important: but do not let me so obtrude them as to irritate my friends and to strengthen my antagonists. It has been the reproach of Christ's church, that it has been too prone to intestine divisions and disputings. "O brethren!" cried George Gillespie "we shall be one in heaven; let us pack up differences in this place of our pilgrimage the best way we can." How wise and good the Covenanter's counsel is! I ask grace to remember it, and, whilst I bate no jot of the truth, to abound in brotherliness and charity.

And I am summoned to aggressive warfare. *Striving for the faith of the gospel*, continues St. Paul. It is a warfare within. I should reform a failing, I should crucify a sin, I should make progress in my personal sanctification, every week. It is a warfare without. I should set myself to wrestle in prayer for the conversion of children, neighbours, friends—a violent man who captures the Kingdom by force. I should speak to them about the things which concern their peace. I ought never to be afraid to rebuke open ungodliness. I ought always to leaven pervasively the society in which I move. Year after year I ought to carry forward the flag of the City of God. While "the troops of Midian prowl and prowl around," what right have I to rest? If I am very weary, Christ was weary too.

Thus I must maintain and defend and enlarge my heritage. I have my burdens as well as my possessions.

March 24.

IT IS CRIMINAL TO DESPAIR OF THE REPUBLIC.

"But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation."—JOEL iii. 20.

IN the spring of 1631 a vessel, the *Charles*, Captain Luke Fox, went from British shores to seek the North Pole. Among the articles of the ship's company, to which each sailor subscribed, one was to the effect that no man should speak any despairing word against the good success of the voyage, "or make any doubt thereof." It is an excellent maxim for me. Hope seldom returns home with empty hands; and those who have articled to sail with Christ Jesus are in a ship which will certainly reach land unbroken.

People tell me that, for myself, a taintless holiness is a dream that is too quixotic to be realised in fact. They tell me that the church loses ground at home, and that the missionaries abroad, while they may be educating the heathen and training them in industry, are not winning them for Christ. But let me refuse to hearken to the prophets of melancholy and defeat. The City of the Lord must and will prevail. Judah shall abide for ever, Jerusalem from generation to generation; though Egypt is desolate, and Edom a wilderness, and *the world passeth away and the lust thereof*.

God is Builder and Keeper of the spiritual Kingdom. No human strength has founded it, and none preserves it from decay and harm.

No human hostility can outmatch the Almightiness that watches over it by night and day. The powers which are fighting for its success are unseen, supersensual, invincible, divine.

And the weapon of the Kingdom is love. It is not to be propagated by the sword, and earthly warriors cannot help it on. Nor does it rely on the influence of the intellect or on the magic and glamour of eloquence, although eloquence and intellect cannot be better employed than in championing its cause. It attains its end by the blood and grace of Jesus, and by the melting and enthralling gentleness of the Holy Spirit. And this is a grace not to be baffled, a gentleness stronger than battalions and fleets.

Its scope, too, is universal, and its duration eternal. There are no geographical barriers which shut it in; so free from exclusiveness is its message, and so adapted to the common heart of the children of men, that it embraces all kindreds and nations and peoples and tongues. There are no time limits which stay its march: after the coming and going of centuries, after the rise and decline and fall of other princedoms, it remains young, incorruptible and undefiled and unfading.

I must be very much in love with pessimism and gloom, if I feel a vestige of despair about the commonwealth of my God and His Christ. Of its good success, let me not make any doubt.

March 25.

NONE OTHER HOPE IN HEAVEN OR EARTH OR SEA.

"*The name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" —Acts xv. 26.

FOR such a name, broad and deep and high, Barnabas and Paul might well hazard their lives. There is none like it; and its every syllable is precious.

My trust is in Christ. I love the title. It assures me that the Father is as interested in me as the Son. He sends, commissions, anoints, christens the Son. He chooses and equips my Good Physician and my Good Shepherd. So much does He care for me that He bids His Only Begotten seek me through poverty and shame and blood, seek until He finds. And it assures me, too, that my Redeemer is well qualified for His stupendous and unparalleled work. He has the unction and chrism of the Holy One. He is filled with the Spirit beyond measure. No enemy can put Him to shame. No difficulty can prove too great.

My trust is in Jesus. Equally dear is this designation of my Friend of friends. He is human, near of kin, my Brother no less than my God. He carries a name which was common among the Jewish people. He has become a member of my defeated company. He understands from personal experience my desperate case. Ah, and so pre-eminently is He the Saviour that He must proclaim the fact in His very title: Jesus, *Jehovah is Salva-*

tion. I see the word Refuge in letters of gold above the gates of the city. I hasten to it, and cross the threshold, and am secure: who will harm me now?

My trust is in the Lord. Sometimes the phrase will speak to me of His unerring wisdom. He is Master, Rabbi, Teacher. I sit at His feet, and learn of Him, and my profoundest questions are answered, my problems are solved. And sometimes the phrase will speak of His limitless authority. He is Ruler and King. He can and will subdue my worst foes. He can and will make all things work together for my good. He scatters my fears, begins and continues and perfects my emancipation, spoils and leads captive the principalities and powers that torment my soul.

Now, let me add the pronoun of personal possession, the *Our* of the text. Nay, let me change it into the singular number, and say *My.* For "the care of Christianity," a master in theology has written, "is for particulars."

All my Lufe, leif me not,
Leif me not, leif me not;
All my Lufe, leif me not
Thus myne alone:
With ane burding on my bak,
I may not beir it I am sa waik;
Lufe, this burding from me tak,
Or ellis I am gone.

Yes, yes, *my Lord Jesus Christ*—all my Love!

March 26.

O SILLY SOULS!

"*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.*"—PROV. xii. 15.

AGAIN and again those shrewd and searching Proverbs describe the fool and his folly. Let me be humble enough to make the wholesome maxims a touchstone to try myself.

Sometimes they have a word which pictures the fool as dense, headstrong, self-confident, perverse. He is determined to walk his own way and to follow the devices of his own heart. It is in vain that he is advised, entreated, encouraged towards that which is better, warned of the precipice and abyss to which his dogged self-will hurries him straight and fast. Such misplaced certitude is the prelude of moral and spiritual disaster. I go astray, when I go in my fancied wisdom and strength. I need perpetually to be the disciple of One more skilful than I am, perpetually to cling to the Arm that will hold me up and guide me past the seductions and hazards of life. Only when my hand lies in Christ's hand is my safety ensured.

And sometimes they have a word which delineates the fool as sapless, useless, unprofitable, good for nothing. That, too, is a true portrait. My real worth begins when I yield myself to God. I may indeed be of service in many ways and to many people before then, a capable citizen, a counsellor rich in saving common-sense, a hearty friend. But

pass into the highest sphere, consider me as intended to promote the divine praise and to persuade men to seek their everlasting peace, and you will see my valuelessness. In these matters I am of no account, while I reject the perfect righteousness and refuse the perfect love. And, in comparison with these, all other matters are as the small dust of the balance.

And sometimes they have a word which depicts the fool as simple and silly. He is unprovided with definite convictions. He is destitute of fixed principles. He has no firm resolves. He is the sport of every wind that blows, the slave of all who employ him to advance their own ends. Let me be rooted and grounded in the truth. Let me base my faith and my behaviour on the strong Rock of Ages, until I am myself rock-like, steadfast, immovable, a man whom "neither force nor fawning can unpin." For he who is *simple* in the negative sense is far on the road to become *simple* in the positive sense—sin's poor creature and tool, blameworthy and evil.

Since already I have been guilty of much folly, I rejoice that Christ receives the foolish, and that, in fellowship with Him, they become wise and holy, those who bless their fellowmen and who have this testimony that they please God. Because they fled to Jesus and confided in Him, I have seen the headstrong grow teachable and meek, the useless changed into towers of strength, the simple built into stability. And I pray that the happy story may be told of myself.

March 27.

HE CALLS ME BY MY NAME.

"*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.*"—Ps. xxv. 14.

THERE is something individual and incommunicable about the blessing which the God of salvation gives my soul. Not one of my sisters and brothers in the family has received a boon which is quite the same.

It is a secret at birth. The regeneration of hearts that formerly were far from Him is accomplished in innumerable modes. At times it comes in the stillness, at other times in the storm. It may be a gradual process, for which the preparation has been going forward through many years; or it may be an instantaneous revolution that has apparently no preface and no explanation. Conversion, "in the intense and incandescent sense," is as multiform as the sunsets of a golden summer, that do not repeat themselves two evenings in succession. And if I have been born of water and of the Holy Ghost, I have had my own particular and personal meeting with the God of mercy. He drew me to Himself, as He had never drawn any before, as He never will draw any again.

It is a secret through life. Because I have my special temperament, which regeneration marvellously ennobles but which even a change so radical cannot destroy, my Lord's training of me assumes a certain form and pursues a certain course. If I am a sanguine soul, He

will teach me the patience and quietness that I need. If I am dull and phlegmatic, He must rouse me into action and zeal. If I am brooding and melancholy in my surmises and thoughts, He will bid me be of good cheer. I may trust Him, Who reads my heart, to guide me, to chasten and sober me, to cleanse my sinfulness, to quicken my lethargy, after a fashion He does not observe with my neighbour, whose necessities are different from mine.

It is a secret in death. It is true, as Sir Henry Montagu reminds me, that "Disease and Death know no faces," that "in the Grave all looke alike," and that "Lazarus' sores will make as good dust as Jezebel's paint." But, when I arrive at the brink of the River and feel its chill, the God, who has led me thus far, will have His own revelation of helpful comfort and His own whisper of satisfying peace. "Soule and soule," the old Earl of Manchester says again, "are differenced in dying as well as in being." In that most solemn hour, I may hope that my Lord will acquaint me with a joy, with which no stranger, no brother nor wife nor child, can intermeddle.

Into what inexplicable nearness of communion He and I are brought! And is there a secret to rival His?

> For voices pursue me by day,
> And haunt me by night,
> And I listen, and needs must obey,
> When the angel says: "Write."

Nay, not the angel, but the angel's Lord and God.

March 28.

AN IGNORANCE WHICH IS BLISS.

"Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him."—Ex. xxxiv. 29.

THAT is the truest sainthood that never dreams of the beauty with which it is invested. Any self-consciousness detracts from the graciousness of a devout character, and lowers the disciple to poorer levels. I would be oblivious of personal worth. I would resemble "Moses of the Mount and the Tables and the shining face."

The refusal to acknowledge goodness in myself is altogether reasonable. It is only the recognition of the facts of the case.

For what have I which I have not received? If I had climbed by diligent effort to my place in God's household, there might be room for boasting, though even then it would be unlovely. But the very reverse is the truth. When I was without form and comeliness, He set His heart on me. And, since, it is He Who has fostered in me the spirit of power and love and discipline, He Who has watched over my growth in the grace and knowledge of my Saviour. Without Him I am penniless and poverty-stricken.

And am I not far distant still from the perfect life? I cannot be content, I cannot cherish the self-gratified and complacent temper, so long as there are such disquieting stains on my robe, and such questionable guests in the hostelry of my soul. "One

miracle I would ask the Lord to grant me," said Anskar, the apostle of the Scandinavian north, "even this, that He would be pleased to work holiness in me." It is a prayer which I require to present daily. It is a miracle as yet but partially performed within my backward and sin-tarnished nature.

And is not my purification a gradual process? The ruby or diamond or sapphire does not gleam forth its glorious colour the moment it touches the lapidary's wheel; little by little it is wrought into its splendid radiance. My upward march is not completed in a year; it will scarcely be more than commenced when I have done with earth and time: it is a continuous progress from stage to stage, from strength to strength. I do not see it yet in its ultimate glory. I remain still in my minority, and the crown and palm of manhood are far in front. I have no right to be proud.

And am I not in the company of an unapproachable Master? Christ is my Exemplar, my Standard, the Comrade beside Whom I walk, the King to Whose palace and presence I go. And, like the mediæval statue of which legend averred that it was always taller than the tallest man who stood before it, He surpasses me habitually and infinitely. The nearer I come to Him, the farther He seems to recede. Of his mother an American singer writes, "I read her face as one who reads a true and holy book"; and thus I read the supreme Face of Jesus, and acknowledge my inferiority, and cry, *I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

No, no! I will not believe that my features shine.

March 29.

ONE CAME AND OPENED MICHAEL'S GATE, AND MAGDALEN WENT IN.

"They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick."—MARK ii. 17.

MY very malady is an appeal to my Physician. He cannot but desire to diagnose the case and to prescribe the cure: it is the work He is here to fulfil.

There is the fever of my sin. At times it assails me with masterful violence. It tingles and burns in my veins, my blood, my face and fingers and feet. It is a passion overpowering, raging, carrying me wherever it will, threatening to destroy me. But Jesus can cool and quiet the feverous heat. He did it for the woman who was a sinner. He did it for Augustine in the first days of the Church. He has done it since for a great multitude. He is willing and able to do it for me.

There is the leprosy of my sin. It is a rotting and festering canker. It grows from less to more and from bad to worse. Bit by bit it debases me into a mass of impurities and sores. In the leper settlement on the island of Molokai, Robert Louis Stevenson was "sickened with the spectacle of abhorrent suffering." He stayed a week, and "played croquet with seven little leper girls"; and then the visitor, with his charm, his friendliness, his sunshine, though he carried his own concealed wound, was gone. I want Some One who will draw closer to me, and effect more for me, than the

kindly stranger; and, blessed be God, I find that Some One in Christ. To the leper He says, *I will; be thou clean.*

There is the atrophy of my sin. It incapacitates, enfeebles, emasculates me. It leaves me without energy, sinewless and impotent so far as the service of God is concerned. But Jesus can make the lame man leap for joy, and run the errands of the King. He can teach the dumb man to sing the old-new psalm of the redeemed.

There is the death that is the issue of my sin. A death, now and here, to what is best in motive and purpose. A death of the conscience and the will, of hope and faith. A death which darkens into irretrievable midnight and total eclipse. But "behold a man raised up by Christ!" Extreme as my necessity is, His Gospel gives me life, His Cross, His Holy Spirit. At His command I forsake my charnel-cave. I am one of those of whom it is written that, believing in Jesus, they shall never die.

"There are Molokais everywhere," Mr. Dutton, the surgeon, said to Stevenson. So there are; and no Molokai worse than this sin-corroded nature of mine. But my sickness is precisely the reason why I should turn to the Healer—precisely the reason, too, why One Whose task and Whose pleasure it is to love and save cannot turn from me. When His help meets my need, I bid farewell to fever and leprosy, atrophy and death.

March 30.

TALISMAN AND VIATICUM.

"*We will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.*"—Mic. iv. 5.

HE walks fearlessly and with a merry heart who walks in the Name of the Lord his God. For what is the adorable Name?

It is Jehovah, the Lord Who is the Living One. How it should impart to me the strength of oak and triple brass! I am distressed by my littleness and by the transience of my life. I have no continuing city here, and I complain that I achieve nothing that endures. But let me be in alliance with One Who remains from age to age, and His lastingness will pass into me. Doing the will of God, I too shall abide for ever; and, when I lie down to sleep, my works will follow me.

It is Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord Who healeth me. Perhaps this is a richer consolation still. I am overwhelmed by my spiritual disease. I die in my trespasses and sins. But He is the Physician Who brings a remedy more prevailing than poppy and mandragora and all the drowsy syrups of the world. It is the medicine of the Blood of Christ. It is the anodyne of the Cross where the Lamb of God takes my sin away. My faith accepts medicine and anodyne, and my sickness and death are vanquished.

It is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord Who sees and provides. I am a bundle of wants, and neither for the necessities of the body nor for the deeper and more urgent necessities of the soul have I

in myself any sufficiency of supply. But He Whose kingdom ruleth over all spreads my table with earthly bread and heavenly; and then, like the shepherd-boy in the Valley of Humiliation, I wear the herb called Heart's-Ease in my bosom.

Or it is Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord Who is my Banner. I move through the midst of foes. "From every bush the lances start." My enemies are countless; and there is no fathoming their subtlety, their inveterate perseverance, their unsparingness. But what oriflamme is this that advances to my succour? The Serpent of Dan? The Hind of Naphtali? The Lion of the tribe of Judah? Nay, it is the ensign of the Captain of my salvation, Who makes me more than a conqueror.

And it is Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord Who gives peace. Scarcely a day which has not its trouble. It springs from my personal circumstances, or from those dear to me as my soul. It is the fear of man, or the fear of death; the sorrow of bereavement, or the sorrow of besetting sin. But in the boisterous weather I am conscious that One approaches closer than before, Whose fellowship means calmness and power.

There cannot be a wiser vow than this: *I will walk in the Name of the Lord my God.* "Give me a great thought," one prayed once, "that I may die with it." But give me this great Name, and I will live with it—live and never die.

March 31.

HE GIVETH LIBERALLY.

"*In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.*" —1 KINGS iii. 5.

TO me also, every nightfall and every day-dawn, God draws near and says, *Ask what I shall give thee.* Let me take full advantage of the priceless opportunity.

I would choose a wise understanding. My Lord, let me have the mind which is open and docile to Thy instruction, from whatever quarter it may come to me. Nature has a hundred voices to teach the man who has an ear to hear. The occurrences of my ordinary history are full of eternal meanings. The Bible descends to me with messages from the skies. The Holy Spirit, if I listen, will never cease speaking, most graciously and yet most mightily, in the secret of the soul. Let each of these be my tutor in things unseen and everlasting.

I would choose a loving heart. "Lord, it is my chief complaint that my love is weak and faint." Towards Thee, Whose thoughts and words and deeds have been mercy and peace persevering and unconquerable, I have been forgetful, ready to murmur, prone to rebel. Towards my fellows I have been selfish and ungentle. Let the sovereign presence of love possess me now, and expel the evil humours from my breast. May no countenance be half so dear to me as Thine. May no task be half

so delightful as that of serving my neighbour, even if for his sake I must deny myself.

I would choose a joyous look. For how shall I extol my religion, my Christ, my Father in heaven, if I walk the world with perturbed and troubled aspect? Nay, my shining features must show that the land is a good land, flowing with milk and honey. So I covet for my own the old portrait that Matthew Roydon painted:

> A sweet attractive kinde of grace,
> A full assurance given by lookes,
> Continuall comfort in a face,
> The lineaments of gospell-bookes.

And, finally, I would choose an obedient will. Master and Governor of my inward and my outward life, let me hold myself at Thy bidding, to go anywhere and to do anything. As the eyes of the handmaid wait on her mistress, responsive to the commandment which is given by the passing glance as well as to that of the spoken word, so may my eyes wait on Thee. Morning by morning I will repeat the confession, *I am not my own; I am bought with a price.* Evening by evening I will inquire whether I have been useful to Him Whose I am. And I shall count every day lost in which I have not published Thy name and furthered Thy glory.

These be large desires. But Thou dost Thyself prompt me to present them. And every one of them is within the scope of Thy power and grace.

April.

Not only by bread man lives, but by
Awe and delight and wonder still,
By glory of the sea and sky,
And mystery of the purple hill ;

And by the rainbow's diamond bridge
That opes a window into heaven ;
Yea, by the wonder of the ridge,
Magnificence of dawn and even :

By all delights His hand hath made,
That, if one counted, should be more
Than words were ever sung or said,
More than the sands on the seashore.

That man who sees and yet not sees,
Nor knows his spirit filled and fed,
Bidding his soul upon her knees,
The man goes starved for daily bread.

Not only by bread man lives, but by
The feast that is not fugitive.
I, who would live, and would not die,
I thank Thee, Maker, that I live.

KATHARINE TYNAN.

There are Three Ghostly Foes to Fight and Foil.

Fighting a long and hard campaign, I shall be very foolish if I disparage my foes. There are many of them; but they serve under a trinity of captains.

If any man love the World, *writes St. John*, the love of the Father is not in him. *The World is my sworn and unrelenting enemy—an enemy all the more dangerous because it professes to be something so different, the best of comrades and the truest of friends. I must take my part, and that with diligence, in the World's business; yet what a risk there is that it should absorb my thought morning and night! and then I shall become selfish and earthly and unspiritual. I must make acquaintance with the World's literature, and much of it is beautiful and good; but I am prone to give it an undue attention, and to forget the divine library which God's finger has penned. I must mingle among the World's citizens, and many of them are love-worthy and full of charm; yet, when I prize them overmuch, they separate me from Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Under its kindly face, the World is a hostile power.*

Your adversary the Devil, *writes St. Peter. Here is another stupendous antagonist. The spirit of my time doubts the personal existence of Satan. But I walk more safely, and I show more wisdom, by believing than by being incredulous. Suppose that the accuser of the brethren does live, unseen and malignant, plotting sleeplessly my harm, his success is only made easier when I am careless and incredulous. All around me, I bless God, the mountain is filled with horses of fire and chariots of fire, with good angels who fight for me. But all around me, too, are the hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places; and their activities should keep me alert and awake. Never should I quit my armour bright. Always I ought to "lie down to rest with corslet laced, pillowed on buckler cold and hard."*

The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, *writes St. Paul. After all, my subtlest and strongest enemies are within myself. Old sin comes back, seeking the mastery again. And much in me quivers towards it, and goes out to meet and embrace it. There, indeed, is my sorest hazard, there my most deadly snare.*

I'm sick o' my hands an' my heid an' my face,
My thochts an' mysel' an' a'.

"O wretched man that I am!"—I re-echo the ancient cry—"who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yes, my worst foes are entrenched within the citadel of Mansoul, within my own household, within my spirit and my body.

My God, I have no might against this great company, neither know I what to do; but—but my eyes are upon Thee.

April 1.

THE TIME OF THE SINGING OF BIRDS.

"*Wilt Thou not revive us again?*"—Ps. lxxxv. 6.

THE time of reviving is a reign of faith. There was the Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Luther and Calvin and Latimer and Knox summoned into being and vigour the religious faith of thousands. They taught them that each solitary seeker after light and peace can go directly to God for himself; that in the Bible every man may hear the royal voice of the Lord; that he who clings to his Saviour's Cross is forgiven all his sins. I ask a personal belief as clear and strong and deep. My grasp of truth is slack. My faith is weakened by a multitude of concessions and doubts. Lord, change it into something victorious.

The time of reviving is a reign of love. There was George Fox, with his Friends, men and women both courageous and pitiful. They were moved by a "concern" for the distressed, the down-trodden, the enslaved, the outcast. They were baptized into "a feeling sense of all conditions." I ask a bigger infusion into my Christianity of true sympathy, an impartation of warmth and colour and glow. Am I not deficient in the graciousness and charity of Christ? Do I not need to be anointed with His infinite compassions? Thomas Aquinas summed up the felicities of heaven in three words, *Videre*, *Laudare*, *Amare*: to see, to

praise, to love. Lord, lead me into this heaven now.

The time of reviving is a reign of holiness. There was John Wesley's gospel, with all the wonders which it wrought. He bade men expect God to sanctify their whole spirit and soul and body. He proclaimed that, so long as those in the family refuse to appropriate the holiness within their reach, it is useless to anticipate a widespread conversion of sinners. I ask grace to lay aside every doubtful habit, and every habit which is worse than doubtful. Am I rid of selfishness and of worldliness? Have my hands, carrying Christ's vessels and doing Christ's work, always been clean hands? Lord, let the cost be what it may, come to me as a refiner and purifier of silver.

The time of reviving is a reign of power. There was young William Burns, telling in Dundee the story of the awakening in Kilsyth. About a hundred remained in anxiety of soul, and suddenly the Spirit of God descended on them, and all were bathed in tears. And a crowd of similar instances might be cited, some in my own day, for God's arm is not shortened. I ask the coming to me of such transcendent Power. May the Fire of the Holy Ghost purge and quicken me. May His Water, surging through me, "bear to the marishes and bitter places healing for hurt and for their poisons balm." Lord, work in me and by me Thy surprises of salvation.

Good beyond telling and beyond thought is the springtide of reviving.

April 2.

CHRIST IS MY PARTNER.

"*For verily not of angels doth He take hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham.*"—HEB. ii. 16 (R.V.).

WHAT is it of mine that Jesus stoops to make His own?

My sin: He has burdened Himself with that, although it remains the evil and abominable thing which He hates. There are aspects in which sin is more His than mine. Its penalty, its curse, the awful wage which it has earned: whose are these? Not the believer's, but the Saviour's. Not mine, if my trust is in Him, but His. I see His unblemished body bared and broken on the Tree—why? Because He has assumed my guilt. I hear Him cry, when the darkness of seven midnights begins to lift, *It is finished*—and what does He mean? That He has endured my misery, and has won my deliverance. There is no romance so astonishing and satisfying; and the best of all is, it is not a romance, for it is true.

My spiritual history: with this, too, Jesus allies Himself. "A kind word to a crossing-sweeper," wrote General Gordon, mystic and hero, "delights Christ in him, as much as it would delight Christ in a queen." Perhaps I think the language startling and grotesque; but it expresses the simple fact. Humble and unnoticed I may be, but when I am His, the Lord identifies Himself with me absolutely and unreservedly. He dwells in me. It is He

Who plans my prosperity, He Who deepens my life. When temptation is overcome, He has strengthened me. When the Bible is bread and wine, He has spoken through it. When prayer is power, He prompted the prayer. In what comfort I should live, since He works in me to will and to do!

My sunshine and my shadow: these, also, are His as much as they are mine. When I have a special gladness, a gladness innocent and pure, Christ has been at the devising of it—Christ, Who intensified the mirth at the marriage in Cana, and Who rejoiced in spirit when His disciples returned successful from their mission. When I make acquaintance with the storm, He is closer still; "He gives His angels charge of those who sleep, but He Himself watches with those who wake." Martha and Mary were not the only mourners whose weeping He has stilled, nor was Thomas the only doubting soul whose perplexities He has scattered and ended. In all my affliction, He, my Brother and my Lord, is Himself afflicted. In all my weakness and weariness, He holds my right hand, saying, *Fear not; I will help thee.*

Wonderful it is that the Son of God, God the Son, should be my Partner. Yet love does not dream of condescension; and His love is such that it welcomes any method which may reveal and confirm His union with me. What an honour He confers! What a fountain of hope He opens! What a source of courage and wisdom He is! Do not let me imagine that I am alone; He does not leave me orphaned, He comes to me.

April 3.

AND I, IN TURN, AM CHRIST'S PARTNER.

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God."—EPH. ii. 22.

NOT merely does He maintain His union with me, but I must maintain my union with Him. This is the life which I am commanded to live.

For instance, I must participate in His death. It is not enough that I should stand beneath His Cross, and look to it as the payment of my debt and the price of my freedom. I must regard myself as sharing in the endurance of the penalty as well as in the riches of the salvation. It will render more adequate my estimate of sin, in what it merits and in what it is. It will increase my assurance that all is well; if I died with Christ, I cannot die again. And it will ensure my holiness; for does not a gulf deep as death divide me from my old thoughts and ways?

So, too, I must participate in His experience. Jesus incarnate: I am to clothe myself in His humility. Jesus tarrying in Nazareth: I am to clothe myself in His patience. Jesus going about doing good, and yet keeping Himself unspotted from the world: I am to clothe myself in His diligence and His purity. Jesus in the seclusion of the mountain-side: I am to clothe myself in His prayerfulness. Jesus taking the cup in Gethsemane: I am to clothe myself in His submission to the will of the Father. I am

no Christian, unless I am moulded into a transcript of the Lord.

And I must participate in His mission. It is still His work to seek and to save that which is lost, and He needs for its prosecution my fellowship and help. In His stead I am to beseech men. As one of His husbandmen I am to labour for the garnering of souls. I have been too unheeding and too indifferent. May God clarify my dim eyesight, until I see the sin and misery around me. May He give acuteness to my hearing, that I may comprehend the wish and the command of Christ. And, "ere night falls and says, Too late," may He send me out to toil.

I hope, one day, to participate in His glory. It is not simply that I shall be led into the city of which He is Lamp and Light. There is something better still. He will draw firmer than ever the bands which unite Him with me; so that I shall sit on His throne, and shall enjoy His dominion and His unrestricted access to the Father and His marvellous perfection and the blessedness which fills His lot to overflowing. Of these things I cannot now speak particularly; neither my language nor my thought is great enough; but, some summer morning, I shall awake and understand.

Ah, but first I must be partner in Christ's death and experience and mission. The glory follows the obedience and the cross-bearing. The heaven of Jesus is kept for men and women and children who drink the wine in the bitter cup of Jesus, and who are baptized in the cold and swelling waters of His baptism.

April 4.

THE WISDOM OF GOD ORDERS MY SINS FOR MY GOOD.

"For there are seven abominations in his heart."—PROV. xxvi. 25.

ON the last page of that autobiography of his soul, over which very many have prayed and wept, Bunyan confesses that this uncompromising indictment of the Proverbs is only too true of himself. "I find to this day," he says, "seven abominations in my heart." Let me accompany him through his list: for probably it is equally applicable to me, entry by entry, count after count.

Doubt is his initial charge; looking into his soul, the great Puritan discovered "Inclinings to unbelief." And have I never felt them? am I not conscious of their uprising and strength? Failure in recollection is next: "Suddenly to forget the love and mercy that Christ manifesteth." And am I innocent of the transgression? I remember my personal ambitions, my political sympathies, my social enjoyments, my family affections; but I have no vivid memory of the grace of my Good Shepherd. Self-confidence is another foe—"a leaning to the works of the Law." And the pride of my old life survives most stubbornly in the new. Remissness in devotion is the fourth line in the black recital—"wanderings and coldness in prayer." And alas! for my fitfulness and my shallowness when I am in the audience-chamber of my King; they are enough of themselves to

consign me to death. Lack of expectation is a fresh iniquity—" I forget to watch for that I pray for." And I, when I ask, omit to prepare for the wealth that God will bestow. Then there is querulousness—" I am apt to murmur because I have no more, and yet ready to abuse what I have." And where has been my thanksgiving to the Lord Who chooses out my inheritance for me? Finally, there is utter helplessness—" I can do none of those things which God commands me." It is the old Pauline dirge and moan. It is my lamentation too.

So in my heart there are seven abominations; but God's wisdom can transmute even my sins into blessings, as John Bunyan proceeds to show. His errors made him abhor himself. They kept him from trusting his own soul. They convinced him of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness. They made him aware of the necessity of fleeing to Jesus. They pressed him to pray unto God. They proved the need he had to watch and be sober. They provoked him to look up to his Lord to help him and carry him through this world; on Christ's kind arms he fell. Yes, and, falling there, he found himself in the safest refuge. His Redeemer assumed the burden of his pardon and his progress and his perfecting; and a new man arose in him, and the man he was ceased to be.

It is sore and shameful that I should be such a constant offender; but if I abhor myself, there is a chemistry of heaven which can extract from my corruptions gleaming silver and yellow gold.

April 5.

ALAS, THE GRATITUDE OF MEN!

"*Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.*"—GEN. xl. 23.

IT was a guilty forgetting. "I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds with coldness still returning."

Was it simply that the butler was absorbed in the affections of home and the duties of business? Through his imprisonment he had been bereft of the touch of a wife's hand and the kiss of a child on lip and cheek. And his occupation was in danger of going to another, his prosperity of being lost. It was scarcely surprising that the treasures so nearly forfeited should engross him, when once they were restored. But home is at its best when I am full of the recollection of my New Testament Joseph, and the wheels of business never run so pleasantly as then. I gain by thinking first of Him.

Was it that at Pharaoh's court he was afraid to speak of his obligation to a Hebrew slave? Doubtless the stranger had conferred a measureless boon on him; but, among the lords and ladies of Egypt, it required no small chivalry to tell out frankly his indebtedness to an alien and a prisoner. And Christ in many circles is almost a forbidden theme. He is not fashionable in the gay world. There are masters of culture and leaders of society who pass Him contemptuously by. In such surroundings am I brave enough to

be His enthusiast, His henchman, His champion?

Was it that he felt a kind of awe and dread when he recalled Joseph? Winning and brotherly as the young captive was, there was a curious separateness about him, a noble scorn of much that the butler might have condoned and approved, an impressiveness of character to which he could lay little claim. It may have been a relief to banish him from thought. Jesus is holy Himself, and He demands holiness in me. I am glad of His benefits, but I may dislike His injunctions. And yet, the better I know them, the more resolved I shall be to bind them on my life.

Was it merely that he was unthinking and heedless? But he had not been so a little before, when the fetters lay on him and the dungeon walls shut him in. It does not commend him that he could become oblivious of his friend, immediately after that friend had lifted him into the king's palace. And how greatly I am to be blamed, if I fail to keep fresh and green the memory of the mighty things which Christ has done for me! Mine was the sorest and shamefullest thraldom, and His the most astonishing emancipation. To forget the Redeemer when His redemption has altered my night into confident morning: there never was ingratitude so base.

Be ye thankful—it is an imperative which nothing must induce me to disregard, and which I must hold in constant reverence. I cannot sound the praises of my Deliverer too loudly. I cannot yield myself too absolutely to Him Who sacrificed Himself for me.

April 6.

GOD'S SECRET STAIRS.

"*Perhaps*."—PHILEM. 15.

ST. PAUL, inspired as he is, cannot be absolutely sure why Onesimus was allowed to forsake his home and his duty in Colossæ. Since the slave's conversion he can guess at some of God's reasons; but he feels that there may be others which lie beyond his ken. He has to use a *Perhaps*—"Perhaps this was the cause; but I will not dogmatise, for I do not know."

It is well that all of the Heavenly Father's intentions and doings are not as clear to me as noonday. It is well that the mists hang about many of them. There are real and rich gains in uncertainty.

It is a lesson in humility. Many important events are extraordinarily unexpected. Two nations go to war, and the superiority of one of them comes to multitudes as a complete amazement. Two other nations, after a century of union, suddenly part company, and do it without striking a blow. Is it then a topsy-turvy world? and is life only confusion? No, but it is a world which the cleverest politician and journalist and churchman cannot explain; and life is a mystery baffling my foresight and my guidance. It is good that my loftiness should be brought low, and that I should be compelled to acknowledge the Lord Who reigns behind the clouds and pursues His own wise and kingly way.

It is a lesson, too, in faith. I am often puzzled. I have often to say, *Perhaps*. But if I cannot smooth out all the wrinkles, I ought to be persuaded that God leads me unerringly. Sometimes I watch a skilful player sit down to an instrument of many keys; and I know that he will bring forth melody. But I cannot predict the precise effect. I may be moved to tears. I may be impelled to action. I may have glimpses of great thoughts and ideals. I may be caught up into regions of ecstasy. It is enough that I am in the master's hand. And if God is the Player, and my life the instrument, I should be confident that He will tune the lights and shadows, the joys and griefs, into glorious harmony.

And it is a lesson in His many-sidedness. I have to tell myself, "Perhaps this is His design," or, "Perhaps that is the purpose of His soul." And so I understand along what different channels His goodness and mercy may flow, and what numerous forces He has under His control. I should be limiting His wisdom and His power if I could forecast infallibly His methods; I comprehend Him better when I confess, "I do not know by what door He will approach." "I thought," the Scottish saint cried, "He would come by the way of the hills, and, lo, He came by the way of the valleys!" It has frequently to be the cry of my surprised and adoring heart.

Surely there are unmistakable gains in uncertainty. Surely I cannot wish that all the blank spaces in the map should be filled.

April 7.

THE DIVINITY THAT SHAPES OUR ENDS.

"*Perhaps he was parted from thee.*"—PHILEM. 15 (R.V.).

THE apostle did not write about Onesimus, *He departed*, but rather, *He was parted from thee*. Of course, the wayward slave absconded of his own accord; and yet a Higher Will was in operation too. In some true sense God had severed the connection between servant and master: does He not bend the wrath of man to His praise? Onesimus departed, foolishly, wickedly: that is the human side. Onesimus was parted from Philemon by the doing of the Lord: that is the divine side.

My life, short as it is, is full of partings. They will plunge me in misery, if I do not trace in them the decree of my King and the thoughtfulness of my Father. They will wear a smile, if I see God everywhere and always present.

Sometimes I am parted from my plans. In a delightful book, the author describes his ambitions when he was twenty-four. There were great provinces of knowledge he meant to annex. "The history of the Church down to the Reformation" was one. "Mediæval romance" was another. "German poetry from Lessing to Heine" was a third. "Dante" was a fourth. But thirty summers later, when he is fifty-four, he mourns that not one of his schemes has been fully accomplished. So I set out with vast hopes; but many of them are

dropped altogether, and the rest must be abridged. Yes, but God had to do with the matter. He weans me from what is of less importance. He concentrates my love and effort on essential things: my study of myself and of Himself, my growth in grace, my glorifying of my Master Christ. And I am enriched and not impoverished when I follow His beckoning finger.

Often I am parted from my possessions. They are stripped off, and keenly I feel the loss. It may be health, which I have to exchange for frailty and pain. It may be money; my life takes on new difficulty and struggle. It may be the dear companionship of my intimates; "They are all gone into the world of light, and I alone sit lingering here." But the disappearance of what is temporal, precious as it is, is designed to bring about the magnifying of what is eternal. There is an inward health, which God may advance by the lessening of the outward vigour. There is gold of grace, whose sheen is increased when the goods and gear of time are diminished. There are a Heavenly Father and an Elder Brother and a supreme Comforter, Who are more necessary and more near when lover and acquaintance and friend are put far away. God takes with His left hand that He may give more liberally and unstintingly with His right.

Thus in my wildernesses He speaks to my heart. Only let me make certain that I recognise His presence in the changes and losses that fall on me. Then I shall be able to welcome them, as Abraham welcomed the angels to his tent.

April 8.

LOVE HATH PERPETUAL WORTH.

"*Perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever.*"—PHILEM. 15 (R.V.).

ONESIMUS was coming back, and coming back never to be separated from Philemon any more at all. It was love which had wrought the marvellous change. The love of Jesus sought the slave, found him, convinced him of his sin, drew him into the new life. It was giving him afresh to the man he had injured, as now a fellow-heir of heaven itself. Neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, could divide Philemon and Onesimus now.

There are bonds which it is hard to break. There is the bond of country. What does the Irish emigrant say, away in the Canadian north-west or the Australian bush?

> Wathers o' Moyle, I hear ye callin'
> Clearer for half o' the world between;
> Antrim hills an' the wet rain fallin',
> Whiles ye are nearer than snow-tops keen:
> Dreams o' the night an' a night-wind callin'—
> What is the half o' the world between?

There is the bond of church. It is a true instinct which keeps me wedded to the religious surroundings of my childhood and youth. There is the bond of home. Brothers may be unbrotherly; sisters may be sundered from each other when the old roof-tree is left behind; but can they forget how they held the same

father's hand and knelt at the same mother's knee? Yet none of these bonds is eternal. Death snaps them. Before death comes, it is conceivable that men may disregard them and live as if they did not exist.

The one love which endures is the love of Christ. When I am His, I am His through *the ages of the ages*. When my friends are His, they are mine so long as His throne stands and He Himself abides. They are parted from me: I am parted from them; but the severance is for a moment; by and by I shall *receive them for ever*. Because they and I trust in one Saviour and are subjects of one Lord, I shall dwell with them and with Him in the inheritance that is incorruptible. From this country no citizen is exiled. In this church all the members continue steadfastly. Not a child forsakes this home.

"All things flag but only Love, all things fail and flee." There are souls with whom I wish to spend eternity in converse and fellowship. I must do for them what St. Paul did for Onesimus. I must bring Christ and them together, that by His mighty power and unfathomable grace He may save them from sin and unprofitableness, and may endow them with His own undying life. Then, when earth and seas are fled, I shall find them again, and I shall keep them always, in that immortal place which He is getting ready for them and for me. There, in their solemn troops and sweet societies, they will entertain me, and wipe the tears for ever from my eyes.

April 9.

ONLY THESE STONES IN QUIET ENTERTAIN THEE.

"*Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*"—MATT. xxviii. 6.

I MAY hold the grave of Christ in superstitious reverence. So the Crusaders did, who left Europe to rescue the Holy Sepulchre from the Saracen. So the Russian pilgrims do, who visit the spot year after year, with streaming tears and many signs of passionate devotion. But the outward shrine is not the lodestone that should attract me. I am to seek not the sepulchre but the Saviour.

Or I may feel only an antiquarian interest in the burial-place of Jesus. I can familiarise myself with the narratives travellers write of those different localities that are identified with it. But are not some able to describe exactly and picturesquely the Church of the Sepulchre, although they repose no personal faith in Him Who died and rose again? He asks from me much more than this curiosity of the intellect.

Or I may pass the tomb of Christ cherishing a sceptical mind and an unhumbled heart. There are many who question whether He has ever quitted its dreariness and degradation. "Now He is dead," they say; "far hence He lies in the lorn Syrian town." Is there any creed so dismal? It leaves me without a true peace in the present, and without an illuminating and satisfying hope for the future.

In quite another mood let me come and see

the sad-sweet place—with thankfulness, with faith, with joy. It is a new grave, befitting the Lord Who has done a new thing in the world's history, making an end of my sin by His dying, and preparing for me an everlasting righteousness. It is a stranger's grave, reminding me how the King of Heaven became poor for my sake, that through His poverty I might be rich. It is a disciple's grave, summoning me to lodge and befriend the Saviour when He is despised and rejected of men. It is a grave, not on a lonely and windswept moor, nor under the baleful shadow of the Hill of Reproach, but in a garden bright with the flowers of spring—a parable of how, when I accept the Christ, my wilderness rejoices and blossoms as the rose. Best of all, it is an empty grave. My Lord lay there once; but He lies there no longer; He has broken His shackles and forsaken His prison. Thus it preaches to me the gospel that the Father is well-pleased with the Son's obedience and sacrifice, and makes me welcome in the Son's name to His home and heart. Thus, also, it is the pledge to my soul of the life of holiness which the risen Master bestows on me through the power of His Spirit. And thus it prophesies the day when I, who sleep like Jesus for a short time in the dust, shall follow my Master out of the darkness into the light of God's presence and the joy unspeakable and full of glory.

O pregnant and blessed grave! Can I resort to it too often? Can I delight in it too ardently? It is God's Acre indeed, and I should never weary of it.

April 10.

BUILDER OR BREAKER OF THE LAW?

"O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways."—EZEK. xxxiii. 20.

GOD impresses on me the truth that His demeanour towards me takes a certain colouring and direction from my demeanour towards Him.

If in thought and life I turn away from the righteousness in which He delights, and which is His native air, what pleasure can He have in me? Through His unbeginning and unending years, He has loved only those things which are true and venerable and just and pure; this love binds Him more imperiously and more changelessly than any codes and statutes could; it is the necessity of His being, and God will cease to be God if He forsake and abandon it. So, when I prefer the darkness to the light, I cut myself off from Him, and He cannot walk and talk in friendliness with me. East and west will meet sooner, or fire and ice subsist side by side. My sin, having conceived, brings forth death; the consequence is inevitable, the issue sure; there can be no other.

If, on the other hand, I abjure the evil which I followed once, how can He do aught else than *run and fall on my neck and kiss me*? It was the evil that He hated; it was not I myself—over me He mourned, He yearned, He hungered. Nothing so pleases Him as to see a human soul rising from the mire and clay. He remembers that at the first the soul was created in His

own image, and He rejoices to hear it praying that the holy image, obscured and almost obliterated, may be restored again. He knows, too, to what kingly and sacred purposes He can turn it in the future; He welcomes a new witness to His grace, a new ambassador of His salvation, a new soldier under His flag. When the prodigal is yet a great way off, the Father meets and greets him, and leads him home.

Let me never forget it, therefore. I shall see the face of God overshadowed with a frown, or aglow with gladness and welcome, according as my heart and my behaviour are in harmony with His will, or are opposed and hostile. How solemn, how individual, how endless is my responsibility!

Yet there is another side. His procedure surmounts and outsoars mine, *as high as heaven is above the earth.* It is not wholly true that His attitude towards me is ruled and determined by mine towards Him. When I have destroyed myself so utterly that I am without strength, He loves me from the charnel-house of my corruptions. When I grieve and disappoint Him afterwards, He forgives me until seventy times seven. Who is so undeservedly and incredibly gracious as He? Both sinner and disciple should thank Him that He is something more than simple justice and unmingled rectitude. I had been hopelessly and eternally undone, if He had judged me only after my ways. I am washed and sanctified and justified, because He judges me after Jesus Christ's ways.

April 11.

NO QUERY IS SO URGENT AS JESTING PILATE'S.

"Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth?"—JOHN xviii. 38.

I MAY return different answers to Pilate's question, and each one of them a wise and noble answer.

I may say that truth is that which Christ approves. If my Lord stood before me at every turning, and walked beside me through my whole history, I should be delivered from falsehoods of the brain and falsehoods of the conduct. Seeing Him, studying His perfectness, learning His teaching, planting my foot in the print of His shoe, I should leave the mists behind, and should climb steadily to the serene mountain-tops that abide under clear skies and in a sunshine as of seven days.

Or I may say that truth is that which the Bible counsels. It would be an excellent plan to rescue and redeem three-fourths of the time which I devote to the newspaper, the magazine, the work of fiction, the desultory reading that runs away with many an hour, and to dedicate it to the Word of God. For then, like those strong men and gracious women who were my ancestors, I should see and love the truth, and, better still, I should live and adorn the truth.

And truth is that which the Spirit enjoins. It is the man baptized with power from on high, and led by the Lord the Spirit, who is a partaker of God's secret. He touches and handles treasures concealed from the most liberal

culture and the most persevering research. Monica, Augustine says, "could discern by a certain indescribable savour the difference between God's revelations to her and her soul's own dreams." May Christ give me this certain "indescribable savour," this unction of the Holy One.

Or truth is that by which the deepest life thrives and grows. It is not dead and cold; it is energising and fructifying. Under its sway my ignorance disappears, my pride, my disobedience. I journey along a path on which the light shines more and more. It permeates me through and through. Gradually it subdues every province and town and hamlet in the little universe of my being, bringing all my thoughts and all my activities into subjection to my Redeemer and King.

And truth is that which sends me out to save and bless. I cannot but speak the things which I have seen and heard. I may suspect the message that does not urge me to move among others, persuading them to accept it and to rejoice in it. The truth has its significance, not for me alone, but for my family, the circle of my friends, the town where I live, my country, the wide world. I dare not hide it under any bushel. I must set it high on the lamp-stand. My connection with it is slight and worthless, if I am not carrying its radiance and redemption to very many.

Lord, evermore guide me into this truth. It is the element in which I should live and move and have my being.

April 12.

I CANNOT DISPENSE WITH MY NEIGHBOUR.

"How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight!"—DEUT. xxxii. 30.

ONE disciple, following in his Master's steps, seeking the daily tuition of the divine Word, himself a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit—he can achieve great things; and I pray God that I may be this disciple. I remember the motto which Linnæus had inscribed over the door of the room where he examined plant and flower, *Numen adest*, "The Lord is present." If He is with one man bending over His rare and faultless handiwork in nature, He is more fully present still in each separate son and daughter within His household of faith. To each He opens His heart. With each He makes His covenant. Each is His living epistle, His good and faithful servant, His soldier who by His grace waxes valiant in the day of battle.

Yet the individual Christian leaps to far more certainty, progress, effectiveness, when he has a comrade of kindred spirit with himself. Alone with God, I may chase a thousand doubts and fears and adversaries; but let my neighbour be added, and we shall put not two but ten thousand to flight.

Let me consider how my brother will aid me in understanding the things of the Kingdom. With all my outer and inner light, with all my guidance from above, I may not be sure whether

I am thinking God's thought and grasping His will. Then it is good for me to compare my ideas and experiences with those of my fellow-pilgrim. There are, of course, *diversities of operations*; but the great lines of faith and conduct are parallel and common; and, in fellowship with my friend, as we converse together, and as we kneel side by side seeking wisdom, fresh illumination will not fail to come to myself.

And let me consider, also, how my brother will breathe invigoration and bravery into me as we prosecute, shoulder to shoulder, the wars of our Lord. I have my moments of despondency and, it may be, of indubitable cowardice and dread, when I imagine that all is lost, alike on the narrower field of my heart, and in Christ's larger campaign against the gigantic forces of error and wickedness in the wide world. Then is my companion's opportunity. He reproves my alarms. He calls to my mind the years of the right hand of the Most High. He summons me back to steadfastness and fortitude.

I make a grave mistake if I fancy that I can keep the faith and finish the course alone. Like Christian in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I am tenfold a better man when I hear some one singing the song of salvation not many paces away. And when two or three join me in supplication, in study, in endeavour, how marvellously my capabilities are enhanced! Heart answers heart, and the handgrasp of my friends makes my own hands strong.

April 13.

SHALL WE NOT MEET AS HERETOFORE?

"*But some are fallen asleep.*"—1 Cor. xv. 6.

JESUS and His Gospel have put colour into Death's pale face. A great scholar describes how the Greek anthologists waited to see the end, and pronounced upon the end when it came with swiftness and tact and certitude. Their verses, he says, quiet and tender as they are in their best period, show how full of mystery and of mournfulness death was. "They cover and fill the whole range of emotion: household grief, and pain for the dead baby or the drowned lover, and the bitter parting of wife and husband, and the chill of distance and the doubt of the unknown nether world; thoughts of the bright and brief space of life, and the merciless continuity of nature, and the resolution of body and soul into the elements from which they came; and the uselessness of Death's impatience, and the bitter cry of a life gone like spilt water; and again, comfort out of the grave, perpetual placidity, and earth's gratitude to her children; and beyond all, dimly and lightly drawn, the flowery meadows of Persephone, and far away a shadowy and beautiful country to which later men were to give the name of Heaven."

Dimness and shadow were all the Greeks could find as they peered into the future. Sometimes they spoke of the "holy sleep" of death; but it was with quite another accent

from St. Paul when he said, in his great Resurrection Chapter, *some are fallen asleep.* Because he knew Christ, he had no fear of death.

If I only fall asleep, my real self lives on. The man who snatches repose in slumber has not ceased to be the man he was. And when existence in the present is over, I do not sink into nothingness or forgetfulness. The Lord Whose I am has an undecaying life, and in fellowship with Him my life abides secure.

If I only fall asleep, my hands have pause and relief from toil. It is not that I am tired of the Master's work in itself; but its execution may tire and try me. To rest awhile is a pleasant change. And in the brief night Jesus will greatly refresh me, so that, rising with the dawn, I shall run and not be weary.

If I only fall asleep, my eyes will open to see the King. What is sleep but a parenthesis, an interlude, a temporary halt?—it is nothing more. I shall be astir once again in the everlasting morning, I and my kinsfolk in the spiritual family. And Christ will be the first sight we behold, and the best.

So let me not dread death. Even the Greeks, Professor Mackail writes, "rise from their seats and take the last farewell with calm faces." And they had not listened to my consolations or met my Christ. I do not deserve my surpassing dowry of the Gospel and the Saviour, bringing life and immortality to light, unless I travel beyond the Greek calm into expectancy and joy. Let me welcome the end. For I sleep to wake; I die to live, as I have never lived before.

April 14.

SIN'S MEASUREMENTS.

"*Whereupon the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, . . . Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*"—1 KINGS xii. 28.

I READ the pitiful words, and I recall an older story that is equally sad: *And Aaron fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it a molten calf; and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.* Evidently the sin of one age repeats itself in another. The golden calf of Sinai, though Moses burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the waters, has its successors in the golden calves of Bethel and Dan.

There appear to be two lessons for me here, one of much encouragement, and one full of the weightiest solemnity and warning.

For, first, I gather that there is little originality in sin. The modes it assumes to-day are replicas of its manifestations yesterday. My century indeed is more decorous in its transgressions than some previous centuries—the gay and godless years of the Restoration, for example, when the sons of Belial were "flown with insolence and wine." But, under the seemlier dress, the transgressions themselves are much the same. It may be a hint to me of the limitations of wickedness. Grace and mercy and peace are many-sided and infinite; their varieties are without end; they address two successive epochs with aspects and accents

entirely distinct. But sin keeps reiterating its old self. And so God in Christ is greater, more resourceful, more measureless than it is. If I cannot quite coincide with the poet that "Evil is null, is nought," I do agree with a lesser singer, "Good is an hundred, evil is one; Round about goeth the golden sun." And the thought comforts.

Ah, but next I gather that there is a long and persistent vitality in sin. Jeroboam's idolatry reproduces Aaron's, with this difference, that now there are two calves instead of one. If I disobey God and meet His commandment with defiance, I am setting in motion forces which will act on and on, through more years than I can enumerate. My example will live and bear its ungracious harvests, when my body is "come to dust" and my spirit "home has gone and ta'en its wages." My errors will be copied by my descendants in generation after generation. Iniquity has its limitations, and for this I am profoundly thankful; but it has also an incalculable and awful energy, which enables it to reduplicate itself many times over. And therefore, by God's saving and preserving power, shall I not reject and hate that, whose misery and mischief are without any terminations which my vision can discern?

Yes, I am wise only if I am impressed by the tremendous vitality of sin, only if I am sadended by my own fatal predilection for the wicked thing, and only if I carry my impotence to the strong Son of God Who can and will bruise Satan under my feet.

April 15.

ROUND CHRIST THEY JOIN HANDS.

"*A man whose name was Joseph.*"—LUKE i. 27.
"*A man named Joseph.*"—LUKE xxiii. 50.

IF they lived apart in Palestine, they live side by side in the eternal city, because Jesus was, and is, the Portion of them both. I look at Joseph of Nazareth, and I learn that earth is full of heaven. In a little cottage in a Galilean town the Redeemer of lost men was trained for His sacred work. I see the man and the Lad in the home and the workshop—the Lad who was the Only-Begotten Son of the Father. The spot was obscure, and it was at the same time the Temple of God. Yes, and let me say to myself: Through the rooms of my house Christ moves, watching me, hearkening to me; and at my ordinary toil he is present. Then nothing will be unreal, nothing slipshod. Then I shall pray that everything may be congenial to Him.

I continue looking at Joseph of Nazareth, and I learn that a small memorial may be a sufficient one. He was *the carpenter*: it is the disclosure of his industry. He loved the Scripture and the synagogue: it is the proof of his devoutness. He was *a just man*: it is the summary of his practical righteousness. Godward and manward let me be as true; and I shall enrich the world, and aid the divine kingdom, more than if I occupied a conspicuous and prominent place. If my life-story is quickly told, it will have long and fruitful

issues. In quietness and in humility I shall have kept both the first commandment of the Law and the second.

I pass to Joseph of Arimathea, and I learn that a true faith will not hide. He had been a secret disciple ; but, in the dark hour when Jesus heard the defaming of many, he was silent no more ; he confessed with boldness the trust and the love that were in his soul. And I am to resemble him, not in his first reticence but in his later courage. Nothing must darken my light. Nothing must qualify my testimony. Let it entail what it may, my espousal of the cause of Christ must be lifted out of the hazy region of debatable things. For if I am ashamed of Him, will He not be ashamed of me ?

I bring the two Josephs together, and I learn that the Manger points on to the Cross. Bethlehem and Nazareth publish the amazing condescension of the Lord of all ; and the message does me untold good. Yet it is inadequate in itself. Jesus must leave the Joseph of His infancy and youth, and go forward to meet the Joseph of His suffering and death and burial. Then, when the atonement and the resurrection crown the condescension, I have a complete Saviour. My inquity is pardoned, my warfare accomplished, my redemption made perfect.

I sing the praise of Him Who died,
Of Him Who died upon the Cross ;
The sinner's hope let men deride :
For this I count the world but loss.

April 16.

IF I COULD EXCHANGE IT FOR AN ANGEL'S LIFE I WOULD NOT.

"*Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*"—Ps. cxix. 54.

IT seems strange that one should break into melody and music over *statutes*, the enactments of law and the restraints of authority; for are not the imperatives, *Thou shalt* and *Thou shalt not*, a curtailment of delight, a crippling of ambition, a checking of impulse? Must I not be free, if my mouth is to be filled with laughter and my tongue with singing? But no! the commandments of God do not really fetter; they introduce my soul to joy and peace.

See how His statutes change my confusion into order. I am lost amid a multiplicity of things, when I am torn from the One Good. I am at sea, without anchor and without rudder, the plaything of the winds. But when God and His Son rule me, the vagrant faculties are called together, the flighty thoughts are marshalled in unity, the activities are turned to what is definite and worthy, my whole being is simplified and braced and compacted. It is a blessed power which ends the vagueness and turmoil.

And see how His statutes change my tedium into surprise. I am not free from the old disease of the cloister, the disease of Accidie. I yield to "a listless, joyless, fruitless, hopeless, restless indolence," which, as Bishop Paget

says, "is more tiring and exacting than the hardest work." But once I love and serve God, I need be jaded and morose no more. Mine are the surprises of freedom, from the burden of guilt, from the fear of the world, from the sting of death. And mine are the surprises of enrichment: new thoughts, new tasks, new heroisms and sacrifices. The monotony and the weariness are gone.

And see how His statutes change my longing into fulfilment. I was hungry. God had *set eternity* in my heart; and short of eternity I could not be content. My "sincerest laughter with some pain was fraught." But the divine law is not an impersonal thing, faultless in its contents and yet destitute of life. It is the disclosure of His Will Who so loved me as to die for me on the Cross. In obedience to Him, in union with Him, I am bound by ties of goodness and grace which leave me nothing more to desire.

And see how His statutes change my self-seeking into self-forgetting. Sin is self, and breeds only misery. But God inculcates faith in a Saviour outside of myself; and He bids me continue looking at Him, and growing up to His likeness, and walking in His steps, and dedicating all my powers to Him. The Ego is blotted out; the Lord becomes First and Last. And "when a man hath tasted this life," the *Theologia Germanica* declares, "it is impossible for him ever to part with it, were he to live until the Judgment Day."

Have I not abundant reason for making God's statutes my songs?

April 17.

A COMPREHENSIVE GOSPEL.

"I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren."—1 THESS. v. 27.

THERE was a time when this First Epistle to the Thessalonians constituted the whole of the New Testament. It is the Book's earliest section and its oldest part. Only some twenty summers had gone, since Christ suffered on the tree and ascended from Olivet. And yet I shall be happy, I shall have a large creed and a wealthy life, if I believe as much about my Lord as these new-born Christians are counselled to believe.

I read the brief chapters, and I meet a divine Saviour. St. Paul styles Jesus *the Lord*, and he addresses his prayers to Him as well as to the Father. He regards Him as infinite, eternal, unchangeable. I must do nothing less; I must be persuaded of His absolute and full Godhead. I require a Prophet to teach my ignorance, in Whom revelation itself culminates; a Priest to deal with my sin, Who is without blemish or spot; a King, Who can transfigure the deepest places of my being. No other will suffice.

And as I continue reading, I meet an atoning Saviour. *God hath not appointed us to wrath*, writes St. Paul, *but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us.* It is a view of Calvary which humbles me very low, ascribing the entire praise of my redemption to Another. It is a view, which insists on the

unalterable holiness of the Lord with Whom I have to do. But it preaches a perfect pardon and peace. My Substitute receives all the spears, and breaks for me a path to God. William Cowper's "dear dying Lamb" is my only confidence and boast.

I read on, and I meet a risen Saviour. The Thessalonians were not permitted to cherish any misgivings about His victory over the grave. God's Son *Whom He raised from the dead*: He was to be their firm assurance and invincible trust. Let Him be mine too. Then I shall understand the completeness of Christ's saving work; God owns its perfection when He lifts Him from the dust to the Throne. I shall know the permanence of Christ's love; does He not live to intercede and succour? And I shall grasp the comfort of Christ's power; "the Seed of God reigns over all," as George Fox was wont to say.

Still I read, and I meet a returning Saviour. *The Lord Himself*, His apostle declares, *shall descend from heaven with a shout*. One day, the mists which encompass me now will grow luminous beneath the Messiah's feet, and will part asunder, and I shall see Him. One day, a light brighter than the shining of the sun will rob this world of all its glory. One day, He that shall come will come. It will be well for my character and life, if I am as certain of it as the Thessalonian saints were.

Their evangel—may it be my evangel also. In breadth and length and depth and height it leaves me with nothing to ask.

April 18.

THE FATAL DISABLEMENT.

"*A man whose right hand was withered.*"—LUKE vi. 6.

A FATAL disablement, indeed!

For, if the hand had not been withered, it might have built a house. An old tradition says that this man was a bricklayer, anxious for the healing of Jesus that he might return to his daily work. And I, too, am summoned to the builder's calling. I am bidden raise the house of a high and worthy character. Knowledge is one of its rooms, to be flooded with light. Holiness is another, and its floor should be inlaid with precious stones. Affection is a third, and on its hearth the ruddy fire is to burn. Peace is a fourth, with its window looking toward the sunrising. That is what my soul ought to be; but, as John Howe says, the comely order of the house is all thrown into confusion. And, with a palsied arm, I cannot mend the ruins.

Or, if the hand had not been withered, it might have held a sceptre. The man in the synagogue was no prince in disguise. But I was meant to be a prince; I was created to rule. The pity is that the monarch has travelled a long and miserable way from his kinghood. In the region of the mind, error influences me as much as truth. In the region of the conscience, the law to which I listen is remote enough at times from God's commandment. In the region of the heart, there are hot passions which carry me headlong. My

hand is quite too nerveless to lift and wield the royal sceptre.

Or, if the hand had not been withered, it might have ploughed a field. The sufferer in the Gospel was hindered by his infirmity from carrying out many a labour of love for his kindred and friends. And my capacity for benefiting others is sadly curtailed by my disease, and in some senses is negatived altogether. Philanthropy, education, legislation, social reform, private charity can all accomplish much for the reclaiming of the waste lands and the weed-and-thorn-spoiled lives of the world. But a living Christianity achieves far more, rooting out the brier and planting the myrtle. If I have no such Christianity, my arm is dead, and I cannot send the plough through the waiting fields.

And if the hand had not been withered, it might have guided a wanderer. It may be asserted that the most effective Christian service is that undertaken on behalf of individuals. In the crowd the message often is lost; addressed to one man, it cannot easily be escaped, and is likely to fulfil its work. But if my right hand is still paralysed and shrivelled, if the Physician of the soul has not yet healed myself, I cannot pen a letter to tell my brother of the Redeemer; I cannot pilot the bewildered seaman to the harbour; I cannot so much as lift a finger, and point the fugitive from the City of Destruction to the Hill of the Cross. O melancholy crippling and incompetence!

Let me look at myself as I will, how unrelieved is my misery!

April 19.

THE WONDROUS HEALING.

"*His hand was restored whole as the other.*"—LUKE vi. 10.

MANY sadnesses are traceable to the impoverished and sinewless arm. But there is a brighter side to the story. Because the hand is withered, it should be ready to welcome the deliverance of Christ.

The first thing is to recognise and bewail my impotence. Not a day went over his head, I may be sure, in which this man did not grieve for his bitter lot; he was more conscious of his affliction than he was of anything else. But it is my sorrow that, spiritual sufferer and cripple though I am, maimed and helpless, I am scarcely aware of my disease and scarcely distressed by it. It demands a special work of God the Holy Ghost to convince me of its presence and to stir me into real concern for its removal. And have I sought and received this superhuman revelation of my need?

The next thing is to obey Christ rather than men. The stone-mason in the synagogue did so. He stood forth courageously before hostile Pharisees because Jesus bade him. They were there to find fault with the Nazarene, and to ostracise and excommunicate any one who seemed to take His part. It was a supreme proof of faith and boldness to disregard them and to please Him. And I must be equally ready to forswear for His sake all others—the world which allures and smiles, the world

which sneers and laughs, the world which frowns and bullies and threatens and hates.

And the last thing is to trust the Healer wholly. When Jesus commanded the man to stretch out his palsied hand, he did not protest, "But, Master, that is just what I cannot do; for the hand hangs nerveless, and will not rise." Though Christ required impossibilities, he would go forward; and, as he went, the Lord communicated His strength, and the impossibilities vanished away. It is a picture in action of my soul's cure. Jesus says, *Repent; Behold the Lamb of God; Come unto Me.* And I am disposed to answer, "I cannot repent, or behold, or come." No, I cannot, if I am left to myself. But Who is This Who speaks in those strange and staggering imperatives? Do I acknowledge Him for what He is? He is not a chance passer-by, mocking me with empty words. He is not a mere man. He is the Mighty God. He is the Saviour, Who has purchased all blessings for me. If I trust Him, His grace will empower me to do everything that He enjoins. *Da quod jubes, Domine,* cried St. Augustine, *et jube quod vis:* Give what Thou commandest, Lord, and then command whatever Thou wilt. It must be my heart's cry.

And so the days of my mourning will be ended. No more will the stately ruins bear on their front the doleful inscription, "Here God once dwelt." No more will the vicious deformity of my soul proclaim that the Great Inhabitant is now retired and gone. Once again I shall be created, after my Father's image, in knowledge and righteousness and holiness.

April 20.

MR. VALIANT-FOR-TRUTH.

"*Only be thou strong and very courageous.*"—JOSH. i. 7.

IF I am to be courageous, I should remember my birthright as a man. Often I am disheartened and oppressed by the contemplation of difficulties—adverse circumstances, it may be, or the unfriendliness of the people among whom I move. But let me tell myself that over most adversaries the human will can triumph, if only it is stout and resolute and brave. "I agree with the wise saying," Sir Edward Malet wrote once, "that *la force des choses* is only another name for *la faiblesse des hommes*." Given an unflinching and indomitable spirit, and what heroisms are within my reach! My strength will be as the strength of ten.

If I am to be courageous, I should understand that he acts most valorously who acts at once. I postpone the encounter with the enemy, or I set about it by some circuitous method, and the arduousness of my task is enhanced, and my own fortitude oozes away. Mr. Kinglake says that Sebastopol might have fallen in a week, if it had been vigorously attacked. But one dark night the French began, and before morning dug a thousand yards of trench for siege operations, and were very proud of their work. When the Russians saw it, they embraced each other in the public streets. Delay multiplies my problems and perils, and diminishes my desire to face them.

If I am to be courageous, I should see that I carry within me a quiet conscience. In the *Soldiers' Catechism* of the Ironsides, I read that "it was a speech of the valiant Earl of Essex," the father of Oliver's general, "that sometimes, when he was on the field, the weight of his sin being heavy on his conscience quelled his spirits, and made him the most timorous man that might be." I am only fit to grapple with the foes outside, when the turmoils and distresses within have been laid to rest. But if I have a good assurance of my forgiveness, if my heart is at leisure from itself, I can go forward against embattled antagonists, and feel no dread.

If I am to be courageous, I should be careful to abound in prayer. After the black St. Bartholomew, one of the most undaunted captains of Henry of Navarre, fleeing from Paris with a few comrades, was much perturbed when he heard a voice from behind a hedge. He concluded that God does not give courage, but only lends it. If that is so, how essential it is that I should realise my utter dependence on Him, and, whenever trouble arises, should have immediate recourse to Him! He will send the help I require for the hour of emergency. He will breathe into me the spirit from which all unworthy forebodings and cowardices have been expelled.

And these are some of the modes by which I, who am full of fears, may gain the heart of iron and oak. Thus the feeble becomes like David, and David like the angel of the Lord.

April 21.

MR. FEARING.

"*His heart trembled for the ark of God.*"—1 SAM. iv. 13.

IT was a trembling into which various ingredients entered.

There was trouble in Eli's mind. He understood the Ark's value, and he shuddered to think that it might be lost to Israel. It was the earthly home of the heavenly King, and he saw that, if it were removed, the sanctuary would forfeit its crown. He recalled the mighty deeds the Ark had done, in the wilderness, at the crossing of the Jordan, before the walls of Jericho; and he could not view with calmness the possibility of its departure. Christ, the Ark of the Covenant: has He the same high place in my thought? His person, His death, His magnifying of the broken law. His intercession — many have no room for such truths; but are they the master-light of all my seeing? If Jesus as the Lamb of God is absent from my mind, mine is a creed without life, a gospel without salvation, a Temple without the presence of the Lord.

There was trouble in Eli's conscience. He knew that he had failed in his duty to the holy Ark. He had permitted flagrant abuse in its precincts. And now he had allowed it to go from its peaceable habitation out to the din and carnage of the battle-field. That sorrowing and penitent conscience should dwell in me. I have not honoured Christ as I ought. I have seen Him put to shame, in public

speech, in books, in society ; and I have kept silence. I have been afraid to stand forth boldly, and to say, "He is my Lord, and I cannot bear that you should disparage Him." In Babylon the exiled Jew preferred Jerusalem above his chiefest joy ; but my Redeemer and Master is misrepresented and injured ; and where has been my zeal on His behalf ? Mine ought to be a mourning conscience, that this has been my kindness to my Friend.

There was trouble in Eli's heart. Timid and yielding as he had been, he loved the Ark fervently. It was the magnet which drew the warmth and emotion of his soul. He could not live, if it were disgraced and banished. And surely that is how I estimate Christ. Despite my failure in witness-bearing, despite the wounds I have inflicted on Him, no one else is so great and so dear. When Principal Tulloch was dying in Torquay, his wife at first was absent, at home in St. Andrews. And he kept uttering a plaintive cry, unconscious of what he said, but conscious of the one earthly thing he wanted—the cry of "Jeanie ! Jeanie !" As he went down into the shadows of the Valley, his whole being called for her who had been his constant help. Is it not my longing when Christ seems removed ?—"Jesus ! Jesus ! Forsake me not, although I have done Thee cruel wrong."

It is a good sign of the soul when these are its troubles. Neither life nor death, nor my own inconsistencies and unfaithfulnesses, will separate me from Him. There is no Philistia which hides Him permanently from my sight.

April 22.

THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE CROSS.

"The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified."—JOHN xii. 23.

"THE last act," Pascal declared, "is always tragedy, however pleasantly the play has run through the others." And never was there a last act to rival Calvary in anguish and terror. Yet Christ said of it, *The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*

For there is a glory of victory. And there has been no victory like that of the dying Jesus. It was won, not over men who provoke and persecute, but over unseen and ghostly foes. Satan and Sin and Death came out to defeat my Saviour; and He vanquished them. Ay, and not in the splendour and omnipotence of His divinity did He essay the awful battle, but in my enfeebled and discredited nature; because it is my defence that He has espoused. And thus He prevailed.

There is a glory, moreover, of reward. But is not His a reward surpassing and unrivalled? It commenced on Calvary. He died in shame; yet what a pomp of funeral He had, in the earthquake, and the noonday darkness, and the conversion of the robber, and the confession of the centurion! The triumph of the third morning followed; and the miracle of the ascension by and by; and, ever since, His reign as Mediator and King. Such a guerdon His death has brought, and is bringing, to my Lord.

And there is a glory of character. Would I see God's green Tree blossom into its choicest beauty? I must see it in the flames. The zeal of Jesus, setting His face like a flint to Golgotha; His submission, when He prayed, *Not My will but Thine be done*; His trust, when in His forsakenness He clung to His God and would not let Him go: ah, Socrates died nobly, but he did not die like this. None of the martyrs has shown such faith and such forgivingness. And my beloveds, who left me with peace in their eyes, were but far-off followers of their Master and mine.

There is a glory, too, of love. And Christ's love and death sound the unfathomable depths; He embraced unspeakable agonies for me. They scale the unattainable heights; through them He assures me of an eternity of blessing in the enjoyment of God Himself. They enrich the greatest numbers; men have been saved in all ages by the bloodshedding of the Good Shepherd, and still His redeeming grace journeys on, and through His shame He will crown multitudes more with honour and joy.

And there is a glory of God. It is the Cross which unveils it to me most clearly and matchlessly. If I want to understand the Father, I must think of the sacrifice of the Son. How inexorably just He is, Who visits my sin with bitterest death although it is lying on His Equal and Fellow! How boundlessly tender He is, Who opens a path for me to His heaven by bidding the sword awake against Christ! In the marred Countenance, in the nail-pierced Hands and Feet, I read God's glory best.

April 23.

FAITH IS BOTH ROOT AND FRUIT.

"We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand."—Rom. v. 2.

THOMAS GOODWIN was Oliver Cromwell's contemporary, and John Bunyan's, and Richard Baxter's, and was of one mind with them in the highest and deepest matters. He has much to say to me about the grace of faith.

He extols faith's Object; and never was there Object so glorious and complete. "Faith," he says, "answers to the whole of Christ." Or, if I wish it in a metaphor: "Faith is the burning-glass which contracts all the beams of the Sun to a point"—such radiant beams and such a peerless Sun. My faith will recall Christ's natures and names and offices, discovering in His Person a universe of good. It will follow His redeeming work from stage to stage; and at every point He will be its theme, its food, its joy. It will appropriate His promises, one after another, *how many soever they be.*

And Thomas Goodwin explains faith's Humility, pronouncing it the lowliest and meekest of qualities. "Faith," he writes, "is the most modest grace that ever was." It does not rely on its own merit and intensity and force. It does not obtrude and exalt itself. When it is genuine, it will not allow me to imagine that it is faith which ends my bankruptcy and endows me with untold treasures. "No!" it protests, "it is not

faith, but the Lord to Whom faith leads you and in Whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells." Like a finger-post on the road to an imperial city, it directs me to go to Him.

And Goodwin portrays faith's Perseverance ; not until " doubt and despair, sorrow and sin, giant and fiend are conquered at last," dare I dispense with it. " This grace," he affirms, " is that which carries the soul on, and never ceaseth till it hath brought it to salvation." " Faith," he maintains, " begins all, and ends all, and manageth all till we come to heaven." When the spiritual and eternal life is newborn in me, it is present. When I pass from the lower to the upper room in the house of my Father and my Elder Brother, it remains as indispensable ; to my lastest moment I trust and cling.

And Goodwin states faith's Paradox. " Of all works," he tells me, " to believe is the easiest and the hardest." It is a contradiction, and nevertheless it is the undeniable truth. Faith is the simplest thing in the world ; because Jesus has prepared for me a redemption that is wanting in nothing, and faith is no more than the saying " Yes " to Him when He offers me Himself and His glorious gifts. But it is the most difficult thing too ; for, rather than owe all to Him, I would climb Pilate's staircase on my hands and knees, or journey over mountain and ocean, or give my body to be burned.

So it is a most urgent question, Have I abandoned pride and self, and learned a child-like faith ?

April 24.

OF MYSELF THE STORY IS TOLD.

"Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him."—NUM. XX. 21.

BEFORE opposition the people of God are cowed, and from the threshold of Canaan they return to the life of hope deferred. Nothing is sadder, and nothing more common.

Did not the experience recur frequently in the history of Israel? When the nation was about to grasp coveted wealth, again and again it was driven back. David was king before the Hebrews were firmly established in their inheritance; and then how brief their occupancy was! Strife followed instead of brotherhood, idolatry instead of the true worship, until the degeneracy issued in the Exile. In Ezra's day there was a new dawn; but it was quickly overcast. Formalism and forgetfulness petrified the hearts of the Jews; and, when the Messiah came, He found faith in but a few. Always some Edom proved too terrifying. Always there was a relapse to the wilderness.

Has it been very different with the Church of Christ? In the Acts of the Apostles I stand on the margin of the Promised Land, and I imagine that ere many years have gone the wide world will be subdued. But the protracted night of the Dark Ages descends; and, when a fresh sunrise breaks, the expectations it stirs are only partially realised: the impulse, the zeal, the affection, are meagre compared with

what they should have been. More than once or twice, a puny Edom puts the Church to shame, and God's sacramental host renews acquaintance with the desert.

Do matters improve when I survey my own Christianity? I have had moments when faith and assurance filled my spirit. God's glory smote me on the face. I lived for a season on the Delectable Mountains. I knew the meaning of Pentecost with its Wind and Fire and Power from on high. But now my hopes are dim, and my fears are great, and others looking on are grieved that my life is not what it was once, a high testimony to my Saviour and Lord. I quiver and flee before the refusal of Edom. I go back to the dry and thirsty land.

Such circuits and repulses and delays are fraught with mischief. There is the criminal waste of time; in doubt and division, failure and recovery, months are squandered that should be devoted to resolute advance. There is the discouragement of fellow-disciples; defeated myself, I cannot beckon the trembler and give the weary my hand. There is the strengthening of the foe; Edom exults and boasts, unbelief is ratified, and sinners are harder than ever to win. There is the sore loss inflicted on God; I break His commandment, I wound His heart, I frustrate His purpose.

O, evil and miserable fruitage of an evil and miserable seed! O, melancholy discomfiture, that I should make so many marches when one ought to be sufficient!

April 25.

HOW SHALL I EXPLAIN THE DISAPPOINTMENT?

"*They forgat God their Saviour. . . . Yea, they despised the pleasant land.*"—Ps. cvi. 21, 24.

EDOM should never have been able to dismiss God's Israel to the rocks and sands of the wilderness. How does the abnormal and pitiful experience come about?

It may be that I am becoming unmindful of my first deliverance. While the Israelites dwelt, in wonder and gratitude, on the night of the Exodus, their strength stood firm; it was when they left those mighty memories and *forgat God their Saviour*, that enervating fear was born. So long as Bethlehem and Calvary and Olivet draw the eyes and fill the heart of the Church, she dreads no antagonist; but, turning away to more trifling matters, she is robbed like Samson of her invincible locks. And when I forsake the snows of Lebanon and the cold waters that flow down from afar, when I cease to glory with the old singleness of soul in Christ and His Cross, I cannot any more march breast forward, unshaken, unseduced, unterrified.

Or it may be that I do not guard against the reappearance of worldly desire. In the desert, Egypt seemed attractive; the hideous summons of the taskmasters and the degradation of the brickfields were blotted from recollection; and Israel looked wistfully again to the flat and fertile meadows and the great

flood of the Nile. The churches and the disciples of Jesus have copied the bad example. There are conflicts and crosses and exacting demands in my Lord's service. Perhaps the life I have abjured has an allurement and a fascination in the retrospect. Were not its fleshpots richer than the manna of the Gospel and of the pilgrim road? I cannot wax stronger and stronger, until I repress such hankerings after the heathen country.

Or it may be that I fail to sustain myself with promise and hope. *They despised the pleasant land.* They did not delineate it in its rest, its abundance, its beauty. How weak the believing society and the believing man are, when they are gladdened no longer by the prospect of the fields of living green on the farther side of the Jordan! The cold breath of doubt paralyses sinew and nerve. The temper of despair kills. I cannot work, I cannot pierce the hostile ranks, if I am uncertain whether any consummate blessedness waits for me across the River. But when I hear the song from those inside the palace, "Come in! come in! Eternal glory thou shalt win," I cut my way through the armed men to the presence of the King.

I must seek a living and continuous remembrance of my salvation, a vigilant watchfulness against the influx of unworthy desire, and a great and joyous hope. Then Edom will be no match for me. Then I shall not dread the adversary, nor revert to the dry and thirsty land.

April 26.

THE ROSE THAT CANNOT WITHER.

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you."—JOHN xiv. 27.

SO, first of all, peace, with God above, with men around, with my own conscience and spirit, is the legacy of Jesus Christ. He *leaves*, bequeaths, it to me. It is something completed, finished, rounded, perfected, which He can bestow in its entirety. He had Himself a great price to pay, a great descent to make, a great shame and sorrow to endure, a great conflict to wage, ere He could procure for my heart a legacy that is so transcendent. "One born in a manger commands the beauteous files," the old poet sings when he is describing the blessings of peace. The manger was the beginning of my Lord's long and dolorous pilgrimage on my behalf. But after the manger followed the Cross on which He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring me, and sinners like me, home again to God. With nail-pierced hands He blotted out my condemnation; with thorn-crowned brow and marred countenance and parched lips He spoke to me the fiat which calms my soul. His death is my life. Does it not render my peace an infinitely sacred possession, to be received and guarded not with thankfulness alone but with deepest reverence too? There is no such costly legacy as this of my Master Christ.

But next, peace, with God and with men

and with myself, is the gift of Jesus Christ. *I give it unto you,* He says also. And therefore He is a living no less than a dying Saviour. My name is not merely in His will; it is in His throbbing and boundlessly tender heart, as He reigns to-day in the heavenly places. His almighty power and His measureless love send to me the Comforter Who is the Holy Spirit, that, as it were by His very lips, I may be assured of pardon, and purity, and fellowship with God, and patience with all men, and the quiet heart, and grace to conquer my temptations and to supply my needs —those various ingredients which compose that illimitable treasure of holy peace. I like to add the thought of the gift to the thought of the legacy. A gift is such a direct thing, and draws me exceedingly close to my King of kings and Friend of friends. And it is more satisfying to accept my wealth from a Person Who continues to care for me, than to have it solely as the result of a stupendous transaction, past and over centuries ago. And then it makes the peace absolutely secure. Christ is not simply the Testator who bequeaths it, but the Executor who dispenses it; He will see that right is done to His estate and to me.

Legacy and gift—how good beyond possibility of telling He is! and how rich beyond dreams of avarice I am! May I prove, by the restfulness that has its home in my features, by the deepening holiness of my behaviour, and by the soothing and tranquillising power that goes forth from me, that I am appropriating my wealth.

April 27.

ECCLESIOLA DEI.

"*Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*"—1 Cor. xvi. 19.

IN my house, as in Aquila's and Priscilla's, the church of God ought to be established. And what will its establishment mean?

It will mean a daily worship. Long ago, wherever Abraham pitched his tent, he built also the altar of the Lord: his own dwelling made of slight and shifting canvas: God's shrine of stable stone. I wonder if I am as eager that His should be the place of honour in the home that I know and love. I wonder if I maintain the seemly custom of family religion. I wonder whether I have erected a firm and abiding altar, at which I and mine kneel and pray morning and night. Assuredly I ought.

It will mean an ennobled kinship. If the house holds Christ's church, the members of the house will be in unbreakable union with Christ Himself. And so, with the Lord at his side, the parent will have a profound sense of the sacredness and glory of his work. The child's character will be hallowed, because he pictures the Holy Child in his society from sunrise to sunset. A perfume from the Rose that beautifies all the Upper Garden of God, will give fragrance to every one of my relationships.

It will mean an etherealised task. House

and church the same! Then the homeliest duties of the mother or the elder sister will be performed for the unseen Lord, and will be sacrosanct like consecrated bread and wine. And the maid, sweeping the floor in Christ's name, will please the heavenly Master, and will resemble Ruth:

> Thus she stood amid the stooks,
> Praising God with sweetest looks.

And it will mean a gracious temper. If I realised morning and night that my home is a sanctuary, though whose chambers and passages Jesus moves unsleeping and observant, complaint and grumbling would be hushed; many cross and angry words would die away unspoken; the sullen eyes and brow would be shamed into a smile; my selfishness and my indolence would hasten to put on the sandals of alacrity and help. Are they not consummations devoutly to be wished?

Charles Lamb once talked with his friends, William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt and the rest, about the people they most desired to see: Chaucer and Sir Thomas Browne, Cromwell and Bunyan. Then, after a pause, he said, "There is only one other Person I can think of"; and he did not name the sacred Name. "If Shakespeare came into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that Person came into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of His garment." Yes! and He is in the room already.

April 28.

A BREATH THAT FLEETS BEYOND THIS IRON WORLD.

"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly."—JAS. v. 17.

AND, praying, he was transfigured. His weakness was exchanged for strength. He wrought miracles of judgment and of mercy. It was not that his power was increased twofold or tenfold; it was that he was lifted into a new world, and was thereafter a new man.

No prayer can make me a partaker, as he was, in the designs and triumphs of God, unless it is marked by Reality. When I speak with Christ's Father and mine, it must be a genuine transaction in which I am engaged, a genuine issue which I set before Him, a genuine boon which I seek. "There is always a place for God to take His hold," Lacordaire said. Let me be certain of it, and, whatever obstacle confronts me, let me consult Him about it and trust Him to grapple with it. The trust will not be disappointed.

And to Reality I must add Love. Elijah—did he not burn with desire for the good of Israel? Indeed, it is impossible for a selfish man to prevail in prayer. They all have been consumed with the ardours of love, those whose petitions remove mountains and save souls and crown Christ with new crowns. My intercessions must be intelligent, prompted by knowledge of my brother's case. They must

be tender, spoken from the heart yet more than from the brain. They must be persevering, not to be denied. Then, when they return, they will bring their sheaves with them.

Its Christliness is another feature of victorious prayer. I, His servant and His friend, am to come to the Throne as Christ's actual and indubitable representative, uttering His wishes and requests, using His language, in complete harmony with His temper and will. I am to be conquered by, I am to be pervaded with, His thoughts, His aspirations, His aims; so that, when I pray, it is He who prays far more truly than it is I myself. When I ask with His seriousness and His expectancy and His patience, my prayers, like Robert Bruce's, will be "strong bolts shot up to heaven."

And let me not forget the Inspiration of the prayer which avails with God. Elijah lived before the Lord the Spirit was given in unstinted measure; I, whose privilege is greater than his, should make much use of that holy and gracious Spirit. He will restrain me from desiring what is hurtful and frivolous. He will fill me with confidence. He will teach me the steadfastness of importunity. He will make me catholic and loving, no longer narrow and exclusive. And His prayers in me will perform miracles.

Am I in earnest to know if I am a true Christian? "Ask the key of your closet door," says Dr. Alexander Whyte. "Ask the chair at your bedside. Ask the watchman why your light was in so long." My secret prayers judge me.

April 29.

CHRIST IS THE BEGINNING, AND THE END IS CHRIST.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God."—Rev. i. 8 (R.V.).

FOR Christ is the sinner's medicine. God's Law has convicted me of guiltiness and disobedience, and has sentenced me to die. God's Spirit has thrust His scalpel deep and deeper into my quivering flesh. I look in vain for any help in myself or in my fellow-men. I am undone, forlorn, at my wit's end. But then I see a Cross, and a Saviour Who sacrifices Himself there for me. I see a Holy of holies in the skies, and a merciful and faithful High Priest, Who pleads for my pardon, and Who has power and prevails. It is the anodyne for my pain. It is the termination of my fear. It is the opening of the great iron doors of my prison-house. It is the dawn of my endless day. Lo! the winter is past; the flowers appear on the earth; and the time of the singing of birds, thrush and lark and nightingale, is come.

And Christ is the saint's security. My obedience and love and endeavour, after I have been forgiven, continue mournfully defective in themselves. Jesus must still undertake for me, and still I must confide in Him. Dr. Taylor Innes has a fine delineation of Samuel Rutherfurd. He depicts Rutherfurd's mind and heart as a mere window, looking towards One surpassing Face outside. Men

may complain that a window is colourless; but it is all the better for that, if it is so transparent that nothing hinders the Face from being seen. The window does not make the Face, and the Face is the only thing which the gazer desires. And may my mind and heart be this colourless and transparent window; their sole care being to conceal themselves, that through them and beyond them I may behold, every day and all the day, the one Lord I require.

And Christ is the wayfarer's psalm, as his journey closes. When I leave the earth and go to Him Whom, having not seen, I have loved, what is my trust? It is that, for Jesus' sake God will welcome me through the gates into the City. Even now, when the course is over and the fight is fought, my faith looks up to the Lamb of Calvary. Even now, when I soar through tracts unknown, I hide myself in the Rock of Ages that has been cleft for me. To George Herbert, as he lay dying, his friend, Arthur Woodnoth, whispered that God was not unrighteous to forget his labours of love; and he recounted some of them. But Herbert stopped him ere he finished. "They be good works," he answered, "if they be sprinkled with the blood of Christ; but not otherwise." The blood of Christ is my earliest refuge, and it must be my latest.

If He is Alpha, He is Omega also. He begins the good work in me; and who else can perform and perfect it but Himself alone? All my trust on Him is stayed; all my help from Him I bring.

April 30.

MARAN ATHA.

"*The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple.*"—MAL. iii. 1.

I NEED a revival of faith in the second advent of my Lord.

Let me think of the comfort of it. I look on to death as the end; and, even for the Christian, death has that in it which is cheerless and cold. But the Bible contemplates another end: not death, but the return of the Master. And how much more inspiriting this picture is! how much more enlivening! If my body has fallen asleep, He will awake it in the morning. If I have had communion with Him here, He will renew and perfect it yonder. If for a little my work in His service has been stopped, He will invite me to resume it in wider fields and with larger powers. In the spring, as I walk in the country, I see sometimes a plough standing in the furrow. When evening came, the ploughman unyoked his horses, and led them home to rest. But the interlude of leisure is over soon, and next day the furrow will be finished. The plough of my Lord Jesus Christ in my feeble hands has usually to halt in mid-furrow. But with the sunrise of eternity, He to Whom I belong will call me again by my name, and will lead me out to other pastures, other privileges, the better world of which He is the Light. Therefore I should anticipate not death but His appearing.

Ay, but let me think of the reproof of it, and

the stimulus. Dean Church has an impressive sermon on "Standing before the Son of Man." What a truth is this, he says, that each of us at last is to be measured with the measure of Christ! I shall no longer read of Him in a book, or look at Him leisurely from a distance. I shall be confronted with His presence. What will my secret thought, what will my outward conduct, seem like when He questions me? What of the negligence and the indolence of that daily history of mine, which appears so quiet and so respectable? I float about, as the current drifts me. I talk loosely, though I know what He said about idle words. I let my eyes and my soul wander where they ought not, though I know what He said about keeping the eyes and the soul pure. The sin and the pain of the world are round me, and I forget that He bids me remedy them. And all this He will bring under His review, when, at such an hour as I think not, He *suddenly comes to His Temple.* Would that I had a more constant and vivid realisation of it! Would that I had a completer preparedness for it! Would that, to my neighbour and to myself, I addressed oftener the question,

> How will it be with me and thee,
> When the King comes in?

That I may rise into stronger consolation and more exultant hope, that I may live in habitual sobriety and righteousness and godliness, let me forecast the opening skies and the descending Lord.

May.

Praise God to-day His choice hath been
To clothe the lovely world in green,
To-day when every grass-blade shows
More finely than the opening rose :

To-day when chestnut leaves half-spread
Feed the starved soul with daily bread,
When poplar-trees are emerald spears,
And thorn-trees bring the happy tears.

What other colours, rose or white,
Should so support us, so delight ?
What blues or violets so brim o'er
The cup of sweets to hold no more ?

Year after year when May comes in,
To clothe the tender world in green,
And set the fairy arches up
In green, the colour of our hope ;

When every branch begins to blow,
Lightly as to an emerald snow,
I praise God that He chose the green
To wrap our lovely mother in.

KATHARINE TYNAN.

There are Three Touchstones to Test my Troth.

Let me ask how I shall prove and certify my discipleship to myself. My Lord Jesus Christ furnishes me with three infallible tests.

If ye continue in My word, *He says*, then are ye My disciples indeed. *As I journey farther from the moment of conversion, He and His truth and commandment are apt to fade in their vividness from the mind. No longer am I so deeply moved by His salvation. No longer do I study His will so earnestly. No longer do I turn so instinctively from every misleading influence. But it will be my interest to remind myself constantly of Him; for it is the perpetual recollection of Him—Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption—which maintains my holiness and my peace and my power. "Win in to see Him," wrote Samuel Rutherfurd to Lady Kenmure: "there is in Him that which you never saw." So let me dwell more than I do beneath the shadow of His roof, scanning His features well as I find them mirrored in the glass of His word.*

Ye are My disciples, *He says too*, if ye have love one to another. *Theoretically I admit that there is nothing which has such intrinsic value as my brother's soul, and that it should be my lifework to teach and gladden and help him. But in practice I fail lamentably. I feel that, in the first century or in the tenth, there were people who would have had a powerful attraction for me; but I do not discover many of them in the twentieth. I am sure that I should encounter them in Rome or Calcutta or Washington; but I do not meet them in my own congregation or my own street. But I am Christ's, only if every one who is dear to Him is dear to me. Do I not miss many opportunities of fulfilling the tasks of the angels, who minister to the heirs of salvation: and of walking in His steps, Who sets such store on the least of His brethren?*

Bear much fruit, *He says again*, so shall ye be My disciples. *Impatience steals away my sweetness. Harshness checks the mellowness of my character. Selfishness and pride give my*

speech and conduct a bitter flavour. I need more of the Holy Spirit—more and more. Let me pray Him to abide with me. Then my days will be filled with silent deeds of kindness, with the bravery that confesses Christ, with the zeal which does not grow weary, with sunny hope. It is what I need, what the world needs, what my Master needs. It is what God will give in answer to prayer. Not in the promise of May only, nor in the attainment of August, but in the "drear-nighted December," the flowers in my garden will yield their perfume, the yellow harvest will clothe my fields, and in the vineyard the purple grapes will ripen to the glory of my Lord.

Continuing in Christ's word, loving my brother, bearing much fruit, I am a disciple.

May 1.

LIFE WHICH IS LIFE INDEED.

"*I know*."—Rev. ii. 2.

I KNOW, Christ announces. Let it remind me of the real supernaturalness of my life. It is a life spent in the scrutiny of a Lord invisible, but close to me, and vigilant, Who never slumbers nor sleeps. The Priest-King, Whom St. John beheld in Patmos, with the raiment as white as snow, with the repose and yet the omnipotence of sovereignty, is the constant Spectator of my unspoken thoughts, my careless words, my deeds which often are done automatically and without a moment's reflection. If I could pierce the thin veil which hides the unseen from my senses, I should find Christ standing immediately behind the veil. Are not my ordinary days extra-ordinary?

I know, He declares. Let it tell me of the quickening impulse of my life. I never can be content with a slight and shallow history, or with a selfish and sinful history, if I am certain that the Eyes which are as a flame of fire are fastened on me everywhere and always. To recollect Him is to cease to cherish a vague and nerveless faith. To feel Him near is to be prevented from leaving the mountain heights of holy living for the marshlands of sin. Like Alcibiades when he thought of Socrates, I shall be ashamed of all disloyalties and unworthinesses, and shall turn again to my rightful King with the cry, *Take away my iniquity*.

I know, He proclaims. Let it be a remembrancer of the best encouragement of my life. He at least overlooks nothing, forgets nothing, appraises and appreciates all. The little churches in Asia Minor had to put up with grievous disabilities, the world's contempt, its dislike, its possible cruelty. Who was the better, their members must have asked sometimes, for their perseverance and patience? and who cared? But Jesus knew. It is my abundant comfort when I seem to spend my strength for naught. Every act of faith, every ministry of self-denial, every humble acceptance of the cross, is acknowledged by the Master and is written in His book.

I know, He says. Let it speak to me of the possible tragedy and shipwreck of my life. He cannot be put off with disguises. He is not misled by my fair appearances and loud protestations. Sardis is pretentious and secure; but He tells her that she is "a lie, a vanity, tinsel and paint." Laodicea has no lack of goods; but, because she is lukewarm, she is poor and in danger of His rejection. Is He to refuse me a place among His authentic disciples? Is He, Who searches me as with lighted candles, to pronounce me destitute of love and dead at heart? O Lord, to Whose gaze I lie naked and open, save me from the dreary shipwreck and the sore tragedy.

Life soars high when it is spent consciously with Christ. Thus, and not otherwise, let me spend it hour after hour.

May 2.

UNDERSTANDING ALL, HE STILL FORGIVES.

"*I have seen his ways, and will heal him.*"—Isa. lvii. 18.

I AM glad that He sees my ways before He heals me. It is a great satisfaction to feel that there is One Who comprehends perfectly the worst of my nature and my conduct. I am concealed to a certain extent even from my nearest human friends. In their companionship I wear the black veil which Nathaniel Hawthorne describes so weirdly and hauntingly. I dare not show them all "the things of night and things of shame" that find harbourage in my imagination and heart. The disclosure would be too terrible; it would force the most forbearing and the most forgiving to flee from me in horror. Yet my conscience can never have peace, my soul cannot rest, until I meet with Some One to Whom everything is clear as the sunlight: the self-seeking, the pride, the envy, the loathsome sin. My craving is answered in the God and Father of Jesus Christ. He understands my sevenfold corruption, my festering leprosy, my filthiness and my idols. No black veil curtains any corner of my being from His examination. Not in ignorance of my real character, not in misapprehension, not in half-knowledge, does He pardon me my evil, and clasp me to Himself. He reads me through and through.

And I am glad that, after He sees my ways,

He still can heal me. The best of men cannot do so. One poet forbids the lost leader ever to come back: "There would be doubt, hesitation, and pain," the glimmer of twilight rather than the confidence of morning. Another, and he amongst the tenderest, thinks of the captain who has been tempted into momentary disloyalty, and has nothing for him but the scathing words: "When faith is gone, when honour dies, the man is dead." But God in Jesus Christ — ah, *who is a God like unto Him, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.* He meets Manasseh, who has made the streets of Jerusalem run red with innocent blood, and He receives Him to His household and His heart. He draws the woman of the city to the Saviour's feet in penitential tears, and the Saviour bids her go in peace. He has room and welcome for me, although my transgressions, ten thousand times ten thousand, are before His eyes. There is no stain that tarnishes His justice, when He so wonderfully forgives; for He has laid my iniquities and all their doom on the Son of His love. I go free with the consent of His righteousness as well as of His grace.

If His vision is penetrating and all-inclusive, missing none of the shortcoming and none of the sin, His compassions are infinite. And therefore I will flee to my one Refuge, "the Godhead's burning flame." It is a flame which reveals, which purges, and which heals. Nowhere else am I safe from the "Ayenbite of Inwyt." Nowhere else am I at home.

May 3.

THAT ONE FACE, FAR FROM VANISH, RATHER GROWS.

"*And now, little children, abide in Him.*" —1 JOHN ii. 28.

I WOULD abide in His Saviourhood. To the last of life I cannot dispense with the Good Physician of my soul. A Christian sins, let it be said with sorrow; and what I must do, whenever I stray and fall, is to bring my sin immediately to the Fountain filled with blood, in which my vileness was washed from me at the first. In this way my estimate of my Saviour will be immensely heightened. I shall reach conceptions of His forgiveness, His patience, His wisdom, His power, which the young disciple cannot have.

I would abide in His Mastership. My obedience has been far more imperfect than I designed it to be when I gave myself to Him, not so prompt and implicit and entire and irrevocable. There have been a hundred disappointing elements in my manner of executing His tasks; but about the tasks themselves there has been only what is honourable and lovely. No servant in the family will bear another testimony; and it is by remaining in the household year after year that the testimony is corroborated.

I would abide in His Example. What He was in work and word and spirit, in doing and in suffering: that, by divine grace, I intended to be when He drew me to Himself. Surely it continues my aspiration still. I feel that a

lifetime will not be sufficient to learn His humility and His holiness, His compassion and His zeal. "No day without a line," Luther said when he was translating the Bible; and "No day without some fresh resemblance to my Lord," I must say morning by morning.

I would abide in His Intimacy. For who knows a friend after one or two interviews? who has probed his variety, his skill to illuminate the mind and to rejoice the heart? And there is no friend like Christ. I must stay with Him, talk with Him, cling to Him, to understand what His brotherhood is. I must test Him in my noonday of happiness and my midnight of agony, the warmth of my summer and the loneliness of my winter. By countless experiments I will discover that He loves to the end.

I must abide: how else shall I prove my Christianity? It is my permanent alliance with Jesus which is evidence that none can gainsay. I must abide: what object had I in beginning? I need not have repaired to Him at all, unless I was anxious that He should regenerate me thoroughly. I must abide: is it not the only way to keep what I have? Without progress, there will be stagnation, decay, the loss of my early promise, the famine and the blight.

And thus abiding in Christ, I shall one day abide with Him, in the home that He has prepared for me, and in the heaven of which He is the glory. From His presence, realised, perceived, a Light as of seven suns, a Joy unspeakable, I shall go no more out.

May 4.

AN OLD TESTAMENT PORTRAIT

"*I gave Hananiah, the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.*"—NEH. vii. 2.

HANANIAH laboured among the dead stones of the Lord's city. By God's help he intended to rebuild Jerusalem, which the heathen had despoiled, and which was a mere shadow of its old transcendent self, into strength and stateliness again. And the church needs men and women who imitate him, aglow with desire for its external prosperity. I may well be ashamed of the paltry gifts of money which, in my selfishness, I reckon enough for God's treasury. I am much to blame that my outward devotion is often so careless and slipshod, and that the organisations and activities of the kingdom of Jesus Christ enlist my regard to such a partial degree. The courts and furnishings of the holy place should be sacred and dear.

Hananiah guarded the centre. He was *faithful*. He kept with a leal heart what had been entrusted to him; he did not let it slip; it was safe in his hands. Jerusalem, the town of his father's sepulchres and the shrine of his Lord's worship—he shielded it well. I should show his fealty. I, too, have a fortress and temple to defend. Let me not be so liberal that I am prepared to modify and to abandon what should be most distinctive of my religion. Let me not abate and soften

for the world's sake any element of the sanctified life, but rather let me keep every element intact and delicate and sensitive and strong. By the truth in creed and the truth in character let me abide, however the wind may blow.

Hananiah walked with a bowed and reverent head. He *feared God above many.* The world he lived in, from Nisan to Adar, from youth to age, was a world dominated by God. Wherever he went, he saw the King, and adored His awful sovereignty, and maintained the strictest watch over himself lest he should offend. And I hope that my piety does not fail in his reverential fear. I hope that I live recollecting God, and shrinking with dread from the thought of breaking His law and grieving His love. I am too easy. I should have more of the old saint's worshipfulness, and abhorrence of sin, and humble self-distrust. I ought to go softly every day. Before the majesty and the omniscience and the dazzling radiance of Jehovah of Hosts, I ought to bend low.

Hananiah belonged to the seed-time. His was an incomplete revelation of truth, his a dim insight into the mysteries of redemption and grace, his a limited and scanty enduement of the Holy Spirit. Yet he had true nobility of soul, and he was as dear to God as he was to Nehemiah, his prince and friend. Let me see that, with my larger light and my more copious riches, I do not fall beneath the pattern he sets me. He who dwells in the noon should excel his predecessor of the dawn. And it will be very strange, very blameworthy, very inexcusable, if a son of the Old Testament outruns and outshines a child of the New.

May 5.

WHICH THE NEW TESTAMENT REPEATS AND SUBLIMES.

"*For he (Barnabas) was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.*" —Acts xi. 24.

BARNABAS laboured among the living stones of the spiritual temple. He toiled not among streets and houses, but among the souls of men. He strove to awaken them from slumber, to convince them of sin, to draw them to the Saviour, to ripen them in faith and holiness. These living stones surpass the foundations of granite and the towers of marble, the strength of the wall and the splendour of the sanctuary. If I am myself quickened from the dead, my brother's unredeemed heart, my brother's forgiven and yet imperfect life, my brother's immortal destiny, should fill me with yearning, should send me to my knees, should impel me to strain every nerve for his sake.

Barnabas took the open field. He was more than faithful—he was *full of faith*, bubbling over with the heaven-born grace. There was a diffusive, contagious, catholic generosity about his temper and work. So he travelled away to heathen Antioch, and, when he found the presence of God in the foreign surroundings, he was glad. And I should display that overflowing Christianity which seeks all, hopes for all, pleads with all, would fain direct all to the Spirit's power and the Redeemer's blood and

the Father's house. Oh, that my Lord would create in me a faith so expansive and large, that I shall embrace the whole round earth in my prayer and affection and effort!

Barnabas walked with a winning and tender face. He has not ceased to fear God; but he has added to his fear a childlike familiarity and liberty of speech; and these have given it music and joyousness. He was *a good man*, whose soul lived in peace, whose words carried comfort and cure, whose step was the approach of Mr. Greatheart, whose very looks were a benediction. I, too, should be so much at home with God, that I shall be free to dispel the clouds from troubled minds and to help stumbling feet into the paths of life. Then, like the Son of Consolation, I shall be a good man, for whom peradventure some might even dare to die.

Barnabas belonged to the time of reaping. He was *full of the Holy Ghost*. From his exalted Saviour he had received in no niggardly degree the Paraclete, Who leads into all truth, Who cleanses thought and feeling and desire, Who keeps the heart restful and strong, Who teaches the lips to speak and the hands to work. If only I were full of the Holy Ghost, what could I not do? what could I not be? I should be refreshed myself, and a fountain of refreshment to many. In me Barnabas would become incarnate again, and the wonders of Antioch would be repeated anew. And the blessedness is within my reach. For God gives the Spirit to them who ask Him.

May 6.

CHRIST FULFILS THE PROPHECY OF THE ARK.

"*And they shall make an ark of acacia wood. . . . And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold.*"—Ex. xxv. 10, 11 (R.V.).

OF noble material the Ark was fashioned. Strength and beauty marked it; for its incorruptible wood was covered with gleaming gold. Does it not preach Christ? He is divinely strong, and no seed of decay lurks in me when I am His. He is divinely beautiful; as Man, as God, in meekness and in majesty, I shall find none to adore like Him. A modern singer praises a lady reverenced and dear; how in her one personality she brought again

> Pallas from the Trojan plain,
> Portia from the Roman's hall,
> Brynhild from the fiery wall,
> Eleanor whose fearless breath
> Drew the venomed fangs of death,
> And Philippa doubly brave
> Or to conquer or to save.

But beside Jesus even one so peerless shows dim and poor.

The Ark held wonderful contents. There was the vessel of manna, the angels' food. There was Aaron's rod, that broke into green leaves and white blossom. There were the tables of the Law, which Moses received in the darkness and tempest of Sinai. Shall I be over-fanciful, if I discover in these also the

premonitions of Christ? He is the true Bread from Heaven, more life-giving and more enduring and more universal than the manna. It is a perennial Maytime with Him; and when does He not put forth His blossoms—blossoms of His forgiveness, His salvation, His sanctifying grace, His promises? I should rejoice that there is no winter in the calendar of Jesus, when He becomes incapable of blessing me. Best of all, as the stern and righteous Decalogue was hidden in the Ark, He covers the condemning law with His perfection, and it has neither sentence nor sorrow now for me.

A golden lid crowned the Ark. It was the lid of the Mercy-Seat, over which the wings of the cherubim brooded and bent. Once every year, the high priest sprinkled it with blood, and made intercession there for the people. And then, all the year round, until the day of atonement came back, the blood lay ruddy on the yellow gold; and all the year round, the glory of the Lord shone between the cherubim. But Christ is at once Mercy-Seat and Minister. With His own most precious blood He appears for me before the Throne of God; and for His sake I am accepted, "just as I am, poor, wretched, blind." He is always there, not once only in the revolving year, but every day and every hour; and always the eyes of God dwell on Him and on me with satisfaction and peace.

Better than the Ark of the Covenant is my Lord Jesus Christ.

May 7.

ANGER IS ONE OF THE SINEWS OF THE SOUL.

"*Be ye angry, and sin not.*"—EPH. iv. 26.

IT was said of Bishop Ferne of Chester, one of the friends of King Charles the First, that his only fault was that he could not be angry. But, indeed, it is the gravest of faults; and if I resemble the too placid and good-natured Bishop, my soul has a long way still to journey ere she will reach her perfect state.

If I cannot be angry, sin will be unreproved and righteousness will suffer. I need to deal sternly and unsparingly with my own errors of mind and faults of temper and waywardnesses of life; I cannot be lenient with them, without yielding to the enemy territory that God claims for His own. And I must be as emphatic in my protest against public evils. It is because of the Christian's willingness to compromise matters and to be silent where he should speak out, that, in the life of the community, many wrongs are unreformed and many virtues are feeble. Indignation is the frame of heart and accent of voice that should be mine, when sin walks the sunny side of the street and righteousness has her back to the wall.

If I cannot be angry, the noblest saints will be disposed to disavow kinship with me. Let me take St. John as an example, the apostle of love. He knew how to flame forth in passionate displeasure. At first the dis-

pleasure was crude and unenlightened, as when he would have called fire down on churlish Samaritans, or would have forbidden the activities of disciples who did not follow his Master. But, in his beautiful age, when all his graces were mature, he remained Boanerges, the Son of Thunder. The sole difference was that now his reprobation fell on the proper things, on Ephesian backgoing and Sardian death in life and Laodicean half-heartedness. He is but one instance. The saints, row on row, summon me to anger.

If I cannot be angry, I am not yet in full harmony with God. For there is hot indignation in Him. I gather it from the denunciations of His Book against wickedness of heart and life, and from its threatenings against men who are wedded to iniquity. I am left in no doubt of it when I think of His dear Son, the Good Shepherd Who hopes and forgives and bears the wanderer home. How His wrath blazed out against Pharisaic hypocrisy and pride and untenderness! What fire glowed in His heart and flashed from His eyes, when He drove the traders from the Temple! How piercing and how heavy were His prophecies of the doom of the impenitent, who cleave to evil and will not let it go! The God of grace is sometimes the God of anger too.

Old Thomas Fuller is right when he names anger a sinew of the soul. "He who wants it," he says, "hath a maimed mind. It is not good to converse with that man who cannot be angry." Lord, deliver me from the mind that is maimed, and give me the mind healthful and alert and Christlike.

May 8.

HE LOOKED ON ME; I LOOKED ON HIM.

"*Now therefore let me see the King's face.*" —2 Sam. xiv. 32.

LET me see the King's face, poor, self-willed sinful Absalom cried. And I may adopt for my own the old prayer, lifting it up into the region of what is holiest and most spiritual, more to be desired than fine gold and sweeter than honey from the honeycomb.

I read in the Old Testament about the Face of God which is the bulwark of His child. *In the covert of Thy Presence*, a Psalm says—in the retreat and shelter of Thy Face—*Thou hidest them*. When His countenance shines on me unmistakably, when His purities and glories are reflected from my life, when I live in the midday beam of His holiness, a son of His house who is catching His likeness, a priest in His temple whose looks are alight as with the flame about a sacrifice: what an asylum is mine! what a muniment! what an impregnable home! Slander cannot harm me. Opposition and hostility die down. The world in spite of itself is overawed. Never was there such a fortress. *Ein' feste Berg ist Unser Gott.*

In the Old Testament I read, too, about the Face of God which is the fulfilling of the heart's desire. The *upright*, it is written, *shall behold His Face*; and, beholding it, they have their prayers answered, their longings realised, their hunger and thirst amply

and finally assuaged. Nor let me be disheartened by the lofty adjective, *the upright;* as if a designation so crystal-clear and resplendent were not for me. It is true that I have lost innocence and rectitude, and that sin is with me through the livelong day. But I have only to ask, and I shall receive a meritoriousness better than my own at its best estate. Clothed in it, I shall see my Father's Face, and in it I shall discover all marvels of goodness and mercy, and my quest will be over.

I read in the Old Testament, once again, about the Face of God which is the ending and crown of life. *As for me,* cried an ancient saint in his ecstasy, *I shall behold Thy Face in righteousness.* Through the mists which enshrouded and obscured the future, his eyes in a happy hour were permitted to pierce, and he had a heart-filling glimpse of the King in His beauty. What the glorious and tender and ineffable Face of the Lord has been to me here—rescue from the enemy, security and protection, joy and rest, the source of all my light and all my power—it will be hereafter, but in fuller measure and throughout an eternal duration. "The streams on earth I've tasted, more deep I'll drink above." And I shall be satisfied.

Now, therefore, let me see the King's Face. He is a most pure Spirit, and I cannot gaze on His forehead and eyes and lips. But let Him be accessible and comprehensible, One Whom I trust and rejoice in and obey, One in Whom I find my Sun and my Shield.

May 9.

THE POTENTIALITIES OF FAITH.

"*All things are possible to him that believeth.*"—MARK IX. 23.

ALL things, Jesus said. And I must not filter and enfeeble His universals, till they have lost half of their magnitude. He means His "All" to be literally accepted. He means its breadth and length and depth and height to slay my doubts, to destroy my fears, and to garrison my heart with restfulness and strength.

Is not simple faith a gate into a far-stretching garden? I stoop to the little lowly door; I pass through with humbled head; and when I lift my eyes, I am in a world of delights. On every hand lie Christ's unsearchable riches; with every step I pluck fresh flowers and fruits. I begin with His pardon, which does away with my guilt, and His righteousness, which makes me just. But soon I come on His peace, and His guidance, and His yoke and commandment, and His winning and unbeaten power. And in the inmost centre of the garden I know that His glory is being kept for me. Faith conducts me to a Christ who is a Pleasance and a Paradise.

And is not simple faith a trumpet-call for the tumultuous battle? To Charlemagne in his palace the echoes came of the magic horn; but they brought him the sorest tidings—how

> Roland brave and Olivier
> And every paladin and peer
> On Roncesvalles died.

But I lift faith's horn to my lips when I am in my direst need, and its blast hastens the Captain of my salvation to my succour. Does Satan recall my scarlet and crimson sin, as though it never could be blotted out? Faith revives once more the memory of the Redeemer Whose blood has an infinite value. Does the foe plot and plan to ensnare me anew? Faith cries, and in a trice my Lord is by my side, and His grace is sufficient.

And is not simple faith an alchemist's acid which cleanses and refines? Everything depends on what I repose my confidence in. If I cling to money, I can conceive of nothing that is better than the yellow gold. If I look up to a dear human friend as my cynosure and pattern, I cannot mount to levels higher than those on which he stands. But let me lay fast hold on Him Who is without spot and blemish, and little by little I am changed into His taintlessness. His character and His Spirit pass into me. No longer am I the man I was, disappointing, ineffective. Nay, I am a new man, of more imposing stature, of vaster faculty, with loves and capacities and hopes of which formerly I had no conception.

"O gift of gifts! O grace of faith!" To him who believes, all things are possible. He has a great content and calm within himself. He is sure of his Lord's fulness, His nearness, His friendliness. He is not troubled by harassing suspicions. He preaches Christ to the world. He glorifies God.

May 10.

FOR HE MUST REIGN.

"*One like unto a son of man ; . . . and there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom.*"—DAN. vii. 13, 14 (R.V.).

HERE is the religious philosophy of history. The four great beasts emerge from the sea, and rule in succession. They have this in common, that they are beasts, brutal and rapacious. But in each case their tyranny is transient and not perpetual. The sceptre they wield so cruelly is wrenched from them, and is transferred to One Who is like a Son of Man. The brute kingdom yields place to a human kingdom. The reign of selfishness and violence is superseded by the reign of reason and love. And the new sovereignty endures : *His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.* The lion, the bear, the leopard, the terrible beast with the iron teeth : at length they disappear. One after another, the captains of Diabolus flee before the standards of Prince Emmanuel. Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God, is Bringer of victory to the discredited and downtrodden. He overcomes the despots who overcame. Let me rejoice in the glorious fact.

I would have Him fulfil the assurance in the microcosm of my heart. There the wicked animal powers have usurped the throne : the lion with its sudden and merciless rush, the bear with its ponderous force, the leopard

with its stealthiness and cunning. I have been their slave. But Christ is stronger, and can wrest from them their authority. He establishes His masterhood, "He Himself with His human air" and His divine Majesty. The weight is lifted from my conscience. The hopelessness is gone from my heart. The captivity is past for my will. Traces of the usurpation survive, relics of that iniquitous servitude to which I was subjected. But, as I continue to submit to Him, these also will vanish away, until He is All in all.

But I cannot be content unless His assurance has a wider fulfilment, in the great world. Everywhere I see men and women in the grip of the lion, or beneath the paw of the bear, or caught in the death-embrace of the leopard. There are so many evil things which wield too undisputed a rule: sceptical and arrogant disbelief, grasping covetousness, suspicions and hatreds, drunkenness and lust, the forgetfulness of God at home, the superstitions and idolatries of heathendom. None but Jesus Christ can undermine the government of the beast, none but He transmute men into His own likeness, the likeness of One Who is both their Brother and their Lord. He can, and He will. And then

> Behold the time of wrath is past, and righteousness shall be,
> And the Wolf is dead in Arcady, and the Dragon in the sea.

Let it be first on the smaller scale, Thou to Whom all things are possible, in order that, when I myself am free, I may fight with Thee for the freedom of others.

May 11.

WHAT WAS IT MADE THEE STOOP TO LOOK ON ME?

"*Of whom I am chief.*"—1 Tim. i. 15.

Of whom I am chief. It is the measure of my self-condemnation. For, even if my sin has not been of that flagrant and defiant sort which all men see and most men denounce, it has had a heinousness and a hatefulness, a stubborn persistency, an unreasonableness and an infatuation, which are all its own. Against the clearest light and the dearest love I have transgressed, on and still on. I know no other heart so unbelieving, so filled to the brim with unlawful imaginations, so proud of its own ability and merit, so determined to run counter to God, as my heart used to be, and as my heart would still be, if a restraining and uplifting Hand had not been laid upon it. I am a very prince of wrong-doers, the foremost of rebellious and unworthy men.

Of whom I am chief. It is my tribute to the mercy and might of my Redeemer. The more accurate is my knowledge of my disobedience, the more relentless my estimate of myself, the higher I will raise my Saviour Who has done great things for me. I shall argue that nobody can be beyond the pale of His grace and power, since He stooped down and rescued me from my pit. That He should love me with a love which the floods cannot drown; that He should take away my filthy

garments, and clothe me in change of raiment; that He has righteousness and resource to defeat all my enmity: for this miracle of miracles let the royal diadem adorn His brow, let the loudest praises celebrate His name, and let divinity itself be ascribed to Him. I never shall see His like.

Of whom I am chief. It is my incentive to affection and holiness and service. If I have been loved out of misery and death and evil; if Christ has deigned to look on me, me "pitched so low" while He is "so exceeding high"; if the change is such a stupendous change; surely, surely, I cannot be any longer my own; every day I must be His Who ransomed me. When my hands grow tired, when my feet become lazy, when my heart is tepid or callous, I have simply to remind my forgetful soul of the depth from which He snatched me. A sight of its black and unfathomable abyss, and a sight once more of His amazing redemption: these will be motive enough to more fervent devotion and more earnest work. What shall I not render such a Lord as mine?

"Methought," said "Rabbi" Duncan on one occasion, "I heard the song of one to whom much had been forgiven, and who therefore loved much. But it was the song of the chief of sinners, of one to whom most had been forgiven, and who therefore loved most. I would know, O God," he went on, "what soul that is. O God!"—he pleaded, and I join him in his pleading—"let that soul be mine."

May 12.

WITH BOTH HANDS EARNESTLY.

"*In diligence not slothful.*"—Rom. xii. 11 (R.V.).

TO be diligent, whether in the world's necessary work or in the holier service of Christ, I must watch against the habits that relax the sinews and muscles of the soul. It may be some evil indulgence; as, in his opium days, Thomas De Quincey, according to Coleridge, never opened his letters. It may be an apparently tiny negligence, that yet is indicative of remissness and sloth; as Curran wrote to Grattan, "You might be a great man if you would learn to tie up your papers." It may be the tendency to loiter and procrastinate; as, in a recent volume, I read the counsel and the confession, "Mind you never give up, as I did, quite twenty years of life to trifling." Whatever opposes diligence must be fought and routed and crucified.

To be diligent, either on the lower or on the higher levels, I must learn not only to use customary opportunities but to make new ones. Sir Herbert Maxwell describes how the Duke of Wellington rose every morning at six o'clock, thereby adding three hours to each working day; and, reckoning from the time that the young soldier went to India, his biographer calculates that thus he filched from fashion and ease 61,359 hours, or 2556 days, or almost exactly seven years of wakefulness and activity. It is an example I ought to follow;

for, as Mr. Lowell tells me, " Inspiration comes by exercise " ; and I must not stand idly waiting for vision and power — I must go resolutely in quest of them.

To be diligent, in God's field or man's, I must not be content until I have fallen in love with my task. " What a grand friend Work is ! " John Richard Green wrote ; and I must cherish the same enthusiasm. Let my sphere be quiet and small, let my toil be the least observed, I must gird myself for my day's darg as readily as the bird trills out his morning carol, piping but as the linnets do and singing because I must. A labour which is forced and irksome has little value for either the human master or the divine. Both of them desire, and both hold in honour, the craftsman who delights in his duty, and who, like the great violin-maker, has an eye that " winces at false work and loves the true."

I must not be slothful : there is so much to learn, so much to attempt, so much to do. I must not be slothful : the time shortens, and life is brittle, and the Lord will soon be here. I must not be slothful : with all my zeal I shall leave my enterprises incomplete, for it is only Jesus Who could say, *It is finished.* I must not be slothful : I wish my King to greet me at last, *Good and faithful servant !* Some things I must fear and shun—

> 'Tis the look of the road
> As it slips out of sight ;
> 'Tis the flight of the day
> And the dread of the night.

May 13.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

"*And unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.*"—Job xxviii. 28.

AND therefore I may be wise, though I have small skill in science, and cannot sound the deeps of philosophy, and do not know how to wield the painter's brush, and am not dressed in the singing robes of the poet. I am wise if, morning and noon and night, I cherish within me the grace of reverence and fear.

But how shall I manifest and declare this *fear of the Lord?*

I do it, if I watch against criticising His procedure in His adorable providence. It is not always easy to prevent my heart making its complaint. Why are my temperament and my lot, the heart is disposed to ask, just what they are? Why are my circumstances so cramping, and often so vexatious? Why am I buffeted by many disappointments? Why, when the greater trials descend, like the avalanche from the Alp or the lightning from the blue sky, should I be expected to say, *Blessed be the name of the Lord*? My querulous heart is prone to these repinings. But I reveal His fear, if I quell them as they rise and worship Him in all He does.

I show it also, if I refrain from cavilling at His utterances in His holy Word. There are sharp reproofs, uncompromising verdicts,

awful penalties, in the Book of books; and I could wish that they were less weighty. There are mysteries that will not surrender their interpretation to my intellect, truths that pass beyond my horizons into infinity; and I crave sometimes a revelation plainer to my mind. But those features of the Bible are good and healthful for the soul. They are designed to teach me a profounder humility and a more sleepless vigilance. They are fitted to remind me that I see but the outskirts of God's ways, that I hear but a whisper of Him, and that *the thunder of His power who can understand?*

I am governed by the same seemly fear, if I guard against bringing to the glories of His Throne a worship unreal and cold. Have not my prayers too frequently been destitute of vital faith and prevailing virtue? Have they not been offered lifelessly, unthinkingly, without strenuousness and without hope? They have not come back to me—being what they are, how could they come back?—like the merchant-ships that carry treasures from afar, the gold of Heaven, the spices of grace and mercy and peace. I am wounding and wronging my Father by the emptiness of my petitions. As I would foster in myself His fear, I must say farewell to all such formalism and hypocrisy.

The Lord is in His Holy Temple, and the seraphim standing near Him veil their faces with their wings. Let me bow down before Him. While I love Him ardently and well, let me revere Him always. The place of His dwelling has an awful majesty, and I must put my shoes from off my feet.

May 14.

WHEN GOD SAYS VERILY.

"He sware by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee."—HEB. vi. 13, 14.

"WHEN George says Verily, there's no altering him," so the neighbours were accustomed to tell one another about young George Fox, when he was a boy at home with his father in the Fen country.

But, in this world of contingencies and misadventures and unforeseen difficulties and dangers, it may be questioned whether any one has the right to say "Verily." I have to safeguard my engagements and stipulations. *If the Lord will*—so I ought to put it—*I shall live, and do this or that.* God Himself is the one Person Whose "Verily" cannot be overturned, and Whose "Surely" stands sure though the heavens should fall. They wax old as a garment; but He abides the Same.

How eager He is to utter in my hearing the word that is so stable, a staff to lean upon through the longest day, a foundation to build upon which no winds can shake or floods remove! I am not like Abraham, of imposing spiritual stature. "I am not wise to know, nor sure of foot to go." A thousand frailties beset me. Yet to me He says—nay, He swears by Himself—*Surely blessing I will bless thee.*

I would receive the message with every new morning. Perhaps I rise with the conviction of sin lying on my conscience; and He bids me claim at once, and in its magnifi-

cent fulness, the pardon He provides in Jesus Christ His Son. Perhaps it is my impotence before temptation that dismays me ; I fear that ere evening I shall succumb to the enemy ; and He offers me the almightiness of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps the morning is dark with anxiety, because one I love is in peril, or heavy with sorrow, because a life dear as my own has been snatched away ; and He comforts me with His own consolation and presence. "I will bless you," He asseverates, "I Myself ; what you cannot win, I will give you freely ; surely, surely I will."

And I would expand His promise over all the future : for, when He begins, who can predict when He will stay His hand ? *Blessing I will bless :* it is how He binds Himself to me *for a great while to come.* If I take from the good and the true and the just, Tennyson says, "the charm For Ever," they crumble into dust. But God writes "For Ever" over each of His priceless gifts. His forgiveness is irrevocable. His strength and holiness and peace and victory are meant to deepen with the revolution of the seasons. The Christ of my age will not be poorer but vaster than the Christ of my youth. The Holy Spirit keeps the best wine to the last. And out of God's heaven, when He leads me through its gates, I shall pass no more. One golden link is joined to another golden link, and the chain is endless.

I am glad, glad, that, when He says "Verily," there's no altering Him.

May 15.

A UTOPIA THAT IS NOT A DREAM.

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem."—Rev. xxi. 10.

THE vision is not entirely for the world which lies on the farther side of death. It has its significance also for this world of day and night, of work and rest, of sinning and suffering.

In the last consummate city all will be worshippers. Its inhabitants will have the upward look. They will recognise God's existence, His government, His watchfulness, His faithfulness, His grace. To them He will be the Reality of realities. They will breathe through all the happy year the atmosphere of the spiritual, the supersensual, the divine, the infinite, the eternal. Atheism, and unbelief, and forgetfulness of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, will have spread their black wings and flown for ever away. But why should the same worship not dominate the city of the present? "Bring me my bow of burning gold, bring me my arrows of desire"; and let me speak so simply and unaffectedly for God, let me live so close to Him, that I shall make the streets and homes I know suburbs of the New Jerusalem.

In the last supreme city all will be brothers. One half of Israel will no longer follow Tibni, while the other half follows Omri: uniting in adoration round the throne of God and of the

Lamb, they will gaze with kindly eyes into each other's faces and will clasp each other's hands in faith and troth. It will be a society in which a new spirit and a new law rule—the law and the spirit of love. Antagonisms, burdens, fears, will have vanished ; selfishness and greed will be unthinkable ; the sorrow which man causes man will never be felt. Does it seem a picture surpassing fable ? But why should I not pray and labour to have it translated into fact, not simply in high heaven but here on earth ? Through the wrangling mart let me carry so constantly the music of love, that my neighbours will catch and echo the holy strain.

In the last crystalline city all will be saints. Its foundations are precious stones : sapphire of hope, emerald of humility, chrysolite of truth, amethyst of trust. Its twelve gates are the twelve pearls of whitest and tenderest purity. No life flourishes in its ethereal air but the life that is redeemed from all iniquity, and that bears the image of Jesus Christ. There is no dust in the highways, no smoke in the skies, no harsh and discordant noise, no chilling and blinding fog ; neither workhouse, nor dram-shop, nor prison. *I saw the holy city*, says St. John. But let me covet its establishment to-day. Let me fight manfully and unflaggingly against the vices that mar the town and the land I love. Why should not London and Paris and Berlin, like the Florence of Savonarola, or like God's heaven, be commonwealths of the saints ?

Yes, bring me my spear and chariot of fire, that I may battle for so great an end.

May 16.

O SHEPHERD WITH THE BLEEDING FEET!

"For thus saith the Lord God: Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out."—EZEK. XXXIV. 11.

THE prophet looked into a distant future. He greeted the day of Christ from afar.

I see the Lord my God in the manger-cradle at Bethlehem. He has emptied Himself. He has laid all His glory down. He has come to my earth, not in the splendours of His divinity but with an infant's palpable and pathetic claim for nursing and nurture. He has taken my nature in its feeblest and most helpless condition, and made it His own nature. It is a long way for the Shepherd to travel in search of the sheep: no arithmetic can compute it, no geography describe it. But the Incarnation is not enough. Not at Bethlehem does the Lover of my soul find me, who have departed from His fold.

Then I see the Lord my God on the hillsides and in the cornfields and on the lake-waters of Galilee. Never man speaks like this Man; His are the words of grace and truth, of fire and dew. Never man lives like this Man; He does not weary healing, feeding, comforting, rebuking sin, and compassionating and blessing the sinner. He is seeking me by the messages of His lips, and by the blamelessness and beneficence of His life. Patiently He is enticing me home. But the ministry of word and miracle is not enough. Not in

Capernaum does the Flockmaster find me, who am so persevering in my revolt.

Then I see the Lord my God beneath the shadow of the olive-trees in Gethsemane. He is praying with strong cryings and tears. He has come very near to the transgressors now, and more poignantly than ever He feels the awfulness of their burden. His sweat, falling down to the ground, is, as it were, great drops of blood. The Seeker is learning the sharpness of the crag and the rush of the torrent. None has cared for me so much ; none has borne on my behalf a sorrow so deep. But His intercession and His sympathy are not enough. Not in the garden of the agony does He succeed in finding me.

But, last, I see the Lord my God nailed to the Cross on the Hill of Reproach outside the gate. He dies for sin, but not His own : He is whiter than the new-born lamb and the new-fallen snow. He lays my immeasurable guilt on Himself. He redeems me by the one perfect offering of His unblemished body and soul. The Good Shepherd is giving His life for the sheep. And this, at length, is enough —the atonement, the blood-shedding. It is enough for God, and it is enough for me. On Calvary I behold the wonder of my iniquity and the wonder of His redemption. On Calvary my God finds me, and conquers, and saves.

Never was there a sheep so silly, so fond of roaming, so bent on destroying itself. Never was there a search so longsome, so untiring, and so fraught with pain. Never was there a Shepherd like the Lord my God.

May 17.

THE TRUST THAT TRIUMPHS.

"*Even as Abraham believed God.*"—GAL. iii. 6.

MANY of the world's grey fathers are exemplars of the trustful life. But Abraham outstrips them in the race, and excels them all.

God bade Noah build an ark to the saving of his house. No sign was there of the deluge that the Lord foretold. Day after day the skies were cloudless. Day after day the sun rose on a careless world. Day after day men bought and sold, and lived in pleasure and in sin. Yet Noah obeyed the commandment. His surroundings seemed to declare him foolish and credulous. His contemporaries laughed him to scorn. Yes, but the ark itself aided his trust. It spoke of God's assurance which could not be broken. It bade him work on in solemn expectation and holy fear.

Enoch walked with God in closest fellowship, and never a shadow dulled his communion, and never a doubt interfered with its intimacy. With a child's simplicity he confided in his Father, and found the Father wise and good. But I do not read that Enoch's trust ever was exposed to shattering trial. He was not sent out to the loneliness and desolation of any wilderness experience. It is true that sinful men derided and assailed; but, summer and winter, the smile of the Highest cheered his heart and upheld his feet in the way. His compensations were more than his conflicts.

Abel offered to God an excellent sacrifice. To the rough and simple cairn in the green grass of the field he brought a lamb of his flock, and lifted a priestly knife, and poured the red blood on the stones. Deep within him was the desire to be at peace with the righteous Lord—the longing desire that his sins, which came between him and God's gracious face, might be taken away. Therefore he gave a life for a life, the lamb's life for his own ; as, in the end of the age, a nobler Lamb would give Himself for me. Abel's trust was undisturbed, and his offering brought him rest.

But Abraham passes beyond his predecessors. He *believed God* pre-eminently, absolutely. He had not Noah's external helps. His sorest distresses, unlike Enoch's, came from the actings of the Lord Himself. To the altar he brought an offering costlier than Abel's lamb. At a bare word from the heavens Abraham went out ; the steps of his faith fell on a seeming void. And then, in the land of promise, God held back his inheritance, and he died a stranger on the soil that was his own. And one day he was sent to Mount Moriah, to sacrifice there his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved. But, through it all, he kept his trust unshaken, and bated not a jot of heart or hope.

It is Abraham's masterful trust for which I dare to pray. So that, though nothing outside aids and supports me, I shall cleave to God. So that, though He Himself postpones the execution of His promise, I shall never doubt its validity. So that, though He quenches my fondest hope and steals my noblest treasure, I shall boast in Him alone.

May 18.

A VERY GOOD HATER.

"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."—REV. ii. 6 (R.V.).

PROFESSOR WALTER RALEIGH describes Milton, fallen on the evil days of the Restoration. He pictures his "lonely greatness which rather forces admiration on us than attracts us." He has an "unrelenting intensity," a "lucidity as clear as air and as hard as agate," a "passion which burns with a consuming heat or with a blinding light." It is impossible to "induce him to forget his principles for a moment in the name of social pleasure." He is "like some giant palm-tree; the foliage that sprang from it as it grew has long since withered, the stem rises gaunt and bare; but high up above, outlined against the sky, is a crown of perennial verdure." So Milton lived and wrote, austerely and purely, when the noise of riot ascended above the towers of the city, and injury and outrage. So I must live, with equal aloofness from every wicked and dubious way; with equal abhorrence of all which the conscience that God has enlightened may not approve. Christ expects me to hate the works of the Nicolaitans.

I require such intolerance and Puritanism, if I am to escape the seductions of sin. There is colour in sin, gaiety, fascination, charm. It beguiles. It entraps. It is not always ugly; often it has a bewildering witchery and spell. My one safety is to oppose an un-

changing front to that which is so fair and so foul. If I dull the keen edge of my hostility, if I abate my distrust and displeasure, the plausible and insinuating foe will quickly have me at his mercy.

I require such unbending and rigorous antagonism to the wrong, if I am to conceive justly and to embody fully the right. There is a type of goodness which is all for concession and clemency in the presence of evil. It parleys with it. It dallies in its society. It can say a great deal in its defence. Probably it discerns admirable qualities in it. But the goodness to which I am called, and which works any deliverance in the earth, is more virile, masculine, soldierly. It will have no friendship with the adversary.

And I require such severities and aversions, if I am to imitate Christ. He also hates the works of the Nicolaitans. I misread Him if I think of Him as altogether meek and gentle. He sends a sword, He kindles a fire, upon the earth. Before His pure gaze, sin blushes, and droops its proud head, and withers away. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and He will not rest till He has trodden every iniquity under His feet.

Yet, although I am to hate, I am to do it with more regrets and compassions than John Milton always felt. My heart must mingle the tears of Jesus with the righteous antipathies of Jesus. While I have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them, I am to pity their thralls and slaves. And, by all possible methods, I am to entice them home to be forgiven.

May 19.

HE LOOKS CHRISTWARD.

"*I will be surety for him.*"—GEN. xliii. 9.

IT is a great moment in Judah's history. Seldom is he grander, tenderer, more loveworthy, than when he offers himself as surety for his young brother Benjamin. But, as I linger with him, he fades from view, and Jesus stands by my side. This is Judah's diadem, that he suggests the Son of his tribe who is also Son of God.

I am Surety for thee, I hear Christ say; and He asks me to remember the flawlessness of His obedience. I had a commandment to keep which is holy and just and good. I should have reverenced it morning and evening, in solitude and in society, in the purposes of my soul and the conduct of my life. But I have broken its precepts, and sought out many inventions of my own; till I cannot bear to think of it, so unanswerably it upbraids and condemns. But One Who surpasses Judah takes my place, and in His lowly and undefiled and glorious life fulfils the law, whose restraints I cast aside and whose requirements I trampled under foot. And, by a miracle of mercy, His righteousness is accounted mine.

I am Surety for thee, I hear Him say again; and He points me to the wonder and worth of His death on the Hill of Shame. I merited the death. The sword was hanging over my head. The indictment and the sentence

were mine. Had justice pursued its inexorable course, I could not have complained that it did me wrong: no penalty is too terrible for my sin. "But out of pity Jesus said He'd bear the punishment instead." And, outrunning Judah, He does lay down His very life, pure though that life is as the throne of the Majesty in the heavens—He lays it down for me. And, like Winkelried's soldiers, I pass over His body through the hostile ranks, and my doom never falls on me.

I am Surety for thee, I hear Him say once more; and He directs my eyes to His living and eternal priesthood in God's Holy of holies. I dare not in myself venture into the burning splendours of the sanctuary where the King has His seat. I cannot, in my wisdom and strength—for these are folly and helplessness—carry my prayer to the Lord Who is a consuming fire. But day and night there is no pause in the advocacy of Christ on my behalf. Day and night He pleads for me His shoreless and stainless merits. And the Father grants Him each one of His requests: how can He refuse His Well-Beloved Son? And thus on me, because I have a Substitute so mighty and so triumphant, are lavished every good gift and every perfect boon.

Better than Judah, who is surety for a brother cherished and dear, is Jesus, Who is Surety for a sinner like me. I praise God for the human friend, who loves me unselfishly and champions me in my need; but O, I praise Him much more for the divine Friend, Who is not alienated by all my evil.

May 20.

OUT OF THE CLOUD THAT SMITES, BENEFICENT RIVERS OF RAIN.

"From His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people."—DEUT. xxxiii. 2, 3.

IN God there is the marriage of attributes which a superficial mind pronounces mutually destructive. Fiery law and fervent love both reside in Him.

I discover the union in the world He has made. It is a world filled with His goodness. The sight of its landscapes, in sunshine or in snow, uplifts my soul. Its woods and fields are musical with song. Its order and arrangement minister to my well-being; "the whole is either my cupboard of food or cabinet of pleasure." Yet it is a world with such possibilities of tragedy. Lightning and earthquake and volcano work their havoc. The strong prey upon the weak. The universe is the home of grim war and bitter death. Bright as it is, it is written over with mourning, lamentation, and woe.

I turn to my life, which He controls, and I have the same admixture of tender and terrible. Mercy is everywhere. Mercy, holding back the fierceness of anger. Mercy, leaving with me more than is removed. Mercy, enriching me through the experience of flame and flood. But, despite the benediction, the winds of sorrow are sharp; the rod, even in the Father's hand, cuts and wounds my flesh; the conflict with temptation is per-

petual and painful; the road is thorn-beset and steep. I receive God's chastisement, not joyous but grievous, as well as His favour that illuminates my days.

I open the Bible, and I have fresh proof of the intermingling in Him of love and law. Let me take the Old Testament, and its prevailing note is stern. There is no full-orbed disclosure of forgiveness and peace. God in His majesty stands high above my feebleness and evil. I have to pass into the New Testament before the thunder-clouds are dispelled, and the distant Father is brought near, and an everlasting friendship is established between Him and me. Through sea and desert the Bible advances to the land flowing with milk and honey.

In the Person of Christ I have the most memorable example of the conjunction of holiness and peace. That such a Saviour should be provided for me: this is grace at its fullest and sweetest. But then through what deep waters and along what stony paths He must search for me! His humiliation and poverty, His subjection to law, His association with sinners, His shameful death and imprisonment in the grave: there is no other way by which He can redeem me. Who knows so well as Jesus both the fire and the love of God?

It becomes me to adore a Lord like mine, in whom righteousness and gentleness, the blaze of noon and the cool of evening, are conjoined.

May 21.

LET ME REPORT ON BOTH LOVE AND LAW.

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God." — Rom. xi. 22.

I AM too one-sided in my conceptions, especially when I deal with what is magnificent and great. I take one of its parts, and exaggerate its importance; and I neglect other angles and facets that are as worthy of remembrance. So I may shroud God in terror; or I may see in Him nothing but comfort: I forget that the gloom and the glory meet together.

I frame a wrong idea of the world, if I omit either ingredient of His character. An unsoftened optimism is false; for my earth is not a heaven. There are burden and mystery and sadness and strife in it, because there is sin in it—sin which lies at the root of physical calamity and evil. But an unrelieved pessimism is as erroneous. My earth is not a hell. God's goodness is everywhere at work, restoring, forgiving, repairing. Not a day in which He is not gracious. Not a life which He does not befriend. The child's untroubled sleep, the young fair maiden's quiet eyes, the plain old man's rosy face: these are proofs of the loving-kindness of the Lord.

I adopt a partial theology, too, if I lose sight of either sternness or clemency. God is a Father, and the Best of fathers. But there are inflexible rigours in Him, from Whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named.

I must not conceal and cancel these. I must not diminish by a hairsbreadth His passion for righteousness, or imagine Him as careless towards my disobedience. And yet it is as wrong to "magnify His strictness with a zeal He will not own." If I will scarcely credit His willingness to save, if I deem it presumption to embrace the great reconciliation of the Cross—ah, how perverse is my infidelity! I am limiting a love and a salvation which have no limits whatever.

I doom myself to a defective life, if I am indifferent either to the one quality or to the other. When I am conscious of no austerity in God, I lose much of my dread of sin, my watchfulness, and my clinging dependence. I keep no guard upon myself, and will "rot to nothing at the next great thaw." When, on the other hand, I delete the tender lines of mercy from my portrait of my Lord, I go far to destroy gratitude and hope and trustfulness in my soul. Trial becomes inexplicable, and the discouraging clouds of confusion hang over me. I have no song in the prison and the midnight, because I know Him Whom I have believed. A personality slack and remiss is the outcome of the one mistake; a personality kept in chains of despondency and depression is the outcome of the other; and both are far distant from the goal to which God summons me.

If I am His child, I will recall His severity—the fan which scatters the chaff, until only the wheat remains. And I will glory in His goodness, which stills the accusing voice of conscience, and which multiplies to pardon.

May 22.

EARTH HOLDS NOT SUCH A FLOOD AS THIS.

"*For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive.*"—Ps. lxxxvi. 5.

LET me rejoice in the antiquity of the river of salvation. I find the Gospel of grace written alluringly in the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of St. John. I find it expanded and illustrated in the Epistles of St. Paul. But here it is, too, in the Old Testament. The good news will deepen and become more precious; but already it has begun to unfold itself. This river of God is no mountain-torrent, in danger of disappearing when the sun is hot; it is fed from far-off springs; it has an assured and victorious flow. Men and women, distant from me in race and home, tasted long ago of its unearthly streams, and were satisfied. Christ's kingdom is cosmopolitan, and Christ's mercy is timeless, neither ancient nor modern, without beginning of days or end of years. I am glad of it. It confirms my faith.

Let me remember the fountain of the river of salvation. It is a divine fountain. *For Thou, Lord*, the Psalmist says; and over his *Lord* I may well pause. In redemption I owe everything to God. Does not the thought slay the purple and gaudy flowers of my pride? But does it not beget the brightest hope?—for He Who is mighty has interposed, and has taken on Himself the herculean task

And the fountain is gracious as well as divine. *Thou, Lord, art good.* Many an attribute of God has its part to play in saving me—His justice, His faithfulness, His power. But I am most in debt to His goodness. It is the root, and the others are the branches. It is the main current, and they are affluents and tributaries. The goodness of God, the God of goodness—how can I thank it and Him half enough?

And let me note the aspect of the river of salvation. It has its distinctive tint and hue. *Thou art ready to forgive*, the singer goes on. There are worlds where no necessity exists for so significant a supplement. There are beings who do not require to learn from personal experience what the healing and restoring pardon of God is. The angels, who behold His face, understand His goodness; but no angel in the shining hosts can say, because of what has happened to himself, *He is ready to forgive.* It is in my world, where sin abounds, that this grace of my Lord abounds much more. It is for me that the streams of His love assume the new colour. Can I praise Him sufficiently for a mercy which overmatches and destroys my evil? He invites the prodigal son to His kind arms. He seeks and finds my disobedient and fallen soul.

What a river it is, with pools that cannot be sounded, with the broadest expanse, with medicinal strength to fertilise all my deserts until they are transfigured into a fruitful field! Have I drunk of it? and am I drinking more and more deeply? Its waters quench my thirst, and are the one necessity of my life.

May 23.

THE STRENGTH OF A CRY.

"*Ye people, pour out your heart before Him.*"—
Ps. lxii. 8.

A CALL, the *pouring out of my heart*, is all that is needed to bring me hope and life and peace and God Himself. Are there not two things involved in the call? There is the sense of want, the conviction of sin. My carelessness is at an end, my self-confidence, my love of the evil which controlled me once. I know my penury, and bewail it. I hate my cherished iniquities. I abhor myself. And there is the turning to the Lord Who heals and saves, like Peter in the tempest, like the Syrophenician mother in her extremity, like Jairus when the music of his home was hushed in silence. In Christ God has met my desperate case. In Christ He waits to receive even me. I appeal to Him. I test His graciousness and His power. If I perish, I will perish clinging to the feet that were nailed to the Cross for sinners such as I am. That is everything which is meant by pouring out my heart before God: the sight of my famine, and the sight of His supply. How easy and unelaborate it is! How near it comes! Surely I can cry.

And there is more to encourage. *Ye people*, the Psalm says. It is a comprehensive phrase, a roomy and catholic invitation. "Ye people," let your birthplace be where it may; there is no exclusiveness in the Lord's redemption: it makes the whole world kin. "Ye people,"

whether rich or poor, employers or employed, princes or peasants; here is the best democracy, the truest equality and fraternity. "Ye people," let your sins be ever so unpardonable: the wanderer into the far country, and the Pharisee who fancied himself holy until he saw that his righteousnesses were filthy rags. For the philosopher the gate is open, and for the unlettered savage. For the theologian the fountain flows, and for the little child. There is no company like this, gathered from every kindred and nation and tribe and tongue. And as there is no multitude so varied and so large, there is none whose members are more to be envied. Happy, happier than tongue can tell, is the people that is in such a case.

A cry will enrol me among them. And why should my lips be closed? Do I feel myself undone and deserving of death? It is the very reason why I should entreat the mercy of God. Am I in sorest trouble? It should send me to Him; He may lead me first to a profounder sense of sin, but soon He will gladden me with His abundant grace. If I am old, *the Holy Ghost saith To-day, after so long a time.* If I am young, let me from this hour look up and pray, *Abba, Father!* There is nobody who may not ask and receive, nobody who may not seek and find.

The method is the simplest. The invitation is the widest. The blessing and the bounty are the wealthiest and the most enduring. Now, let me pour out my heart.

May 24.

GOD HAS A FEW OF US WHOM HE WHISPERS IN THE EAR.

"And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you."—LUKE xxiv. 49.

THE Mystics of the Middle Ages, John Eckhardt and John Tauler, Henry Suso and Nicholas of Basel, were accustomed to say that there are three stages on the road to perfection. The first is Purification. The second is Illumination. The third is Union. Upward to each of these stages it is the task of the Holy Ghost, Who is the living and abiding Promise of Christ's Father and mine, to conduct me.

He purifies. No besetting sin can continue to lodge side by side with Him in the same heart. No deficiency in virtue and grace can mark permanently the soul in which He is the governing and inspiring force. He summons me from slumber and death. He communicates to me, not forgiveness merely and peace, but unhoped-for possibilities of holiness and a close and quickening friendship with God. There are revolutions which mean terror and despair; but the revolution He accomplishes is as delightful as it is drastic. I was blind, and I see. I was a leper, and I am cleansed. I was dead, and I am raised into new life.

And He illumines. I take two men, both of them diligent students of the truth of God. One of them brings to his investigation of the Scriptures the brilliance and the patience and

the erudition of a fine scholarship ; but nothing beyond this, nothing more unearthly. The other has not had anything like the same intellectual opportunity ; but, more than most, he enjoys the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Thankful as I must always be for the scholar's learning, I shall profit more by the instruction of his humbler and loftier neighbour. And let me be myself baptized with Power from on high, and I shall find my way unerringly to the heart of the Bible.

And He unites. It is the supreme mystery. It is the most unutterable joy. He infuses into me a life which is nothing lower than the life of Jesus Christ Himself. " Who is there ? " asked the Lord of the saint who knocked at the gate of Paradise, as the story runs in the mystical books. " It is I," the saint answered. But the gate did not open. Again the trembling saint drew near, and knocked. " Who is there ? " came the Voice from within. " It is Thou," replied the saint, grown wiser ; and immediately the celestial gate swung wide. As I harbour the Holy Ghost and obey Him, my will is merged and lost in Christ's will. Lo, the " I " is already the " Thou."

" Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear." But if I hearken to God the Spirit's whisper, mine is the confidence of Abt Vogler : " The rest may reason and welcome, 'tis we musicians know." For I can covet and conceive nothing so good as His Purification, His Illumination, and His Union.

May 25.

FOR THE GRACE OF HIS LIPS THE KING SHALL BE HIS FRIEND.

'*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*"—Acts ii. 4.

ONLY let me be filled with the Holy Ghost, and I shall speak with strange tongues.

I shall employ sometimes the tongue of monition and warning. The Divine Spirit has shown me ample reason for seriousness. He has told me of the evil of sin and its ill-desert, of God's broken law and the tribulation and anguish which it decrees against the transgressor. Can I see those who are careless of these inexorable facts, without striving in all love and faithfulness to awaken them to the sense of their wrong-doing and danger? It is a delicate task. It must not be gone about harshly. It demands the grace of tears. But He Who gives the message will give the equipment, and will enable me to say the right word in the right tone.

And sometimes I shall employ the tongue of persuasion and entreaty. With me God's pleading Spirit used many arguments, until at last He prevailed over my obstinacy. Will He not prompt me to do to others as He has done to me? Loving them, longing for their home-coming, realising how much they miss while they are absent from the Father's house, I shall have recourse now to the iron trumpet of fear and again to the silver trumpet of

promise. Not only shall I beseech God for my friends when I am alone with Him, but I shall beseech themselves directly and eagerly to consider the things which pertain to their peace.

And sometimes I shall employ the tongue of instruction. Has not the Holy Ghost opened to me a fresh and marvellous world? I am like the lone watcher of the skies, when a new planet, or rather a galaxy of new planets, swims into his ken. God and Christ and man, the present and the future, Law and Gospel, privilege and duty, nature and grace: they are all gloriously different from what they were. And must I not share the astonishing secrets with my fellows? I am much to be blamed if, in my day of plenty, I do not carry out heaven's bread and wine to those who are hungry and athirst.

And often I shall employ the tongue of consolation. To me the Lord the Spirit has been the Paraclete, Advocate Who defends my cause, Comforter Who dispels my dread. And I see on every side the anxious-hearted, the burdened, haunted by the memory of their past sins, or oppressed by their shameful weaknesses, or pierced through with grievous and agonising sorrows. Have I not been blessed that I may bless? Have I not been taught "a sweetness never-failing, sweetness happy and secure," that I may soothe and sympathise? Not a day should come and go, in which I do not speak a word in season to him who is weary.

These are the lips which make the King my Friend.

May 26.

J'Y SUIS, J'Y RESTE.

"And Ittai answered the king and said, As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be."—2 SAM. XV. 21.

THIS alien from the commonwealth of Israel might have been the bright original of George Herbert's "mark-man safe and sure," who "never melts or thaws at close tentations." Or he might have inspired Wordsworth's Happy Warrior, "who comprehends his trust, and to the same keeps faithful with a singleness of aim."

He had the hardihood of the soldier. *Whether in death or life*, let the sun be shining or the snow be falling, his resolution was taken, his mind was firm. And follower as I am of the Prince of Peace, I cannot dispense with the soldierly qualities. I must be decided, not wavering between two opinions. I must be straightforward, espousing my cause in frankest and manliest fashion. I must be courageous, enduring and persevering, never counting the campaign lost, never acknowledging defeat, refusing to despair.

He had the loyalty of the subject. *My lord the king*, he said; *thy servant*, he said again; and on lips like his there is not a suspicion of falsity in the vow of allegiance. I, too, must select my side and my Leader with my eyes open, choosing where I shall be found as a thinking and reasoning and responsible man. And where I have elected to stand, I must

remain, staying in good report and bad by my flag and my Captain, so that never will He be compelled to ask, *Will ye also go away?* or to mourn, *Demas hath forsaken Me.*

He had the constancy of the friend. It added fuel to the fires of his attachment that his master was maligned, and driven from his throne, and confronted with a future of uncertainty and foreboding. And my friendship, for the human comrade and for the heavenly Lord, is of little worth, unless it comes forth finer and stronger from the hottest crucible of trial. Certainly I am no brother or sister of Jesus Christ, if I cannot speak a generous word for Him, and do a brave deed, when He is despised and rejected.

And he had the reverence of the worshipper. *As the Lord liveth:* it was the solemn oath he swore. At David's court he had come to see how much better Jehovah of Israel was than Dagon of Gath. Let it be the crown of my character, this confession of God as my own God. For Him let me surrender every one of my idols, not those alone which are undisguisedly ugly, but the others which are invested with charm and innocence and a mighty magnetism of their own. The dearest of them must not have His place.

His God, his friend, his king, his commander: to each of them Ittai was true as tempered steel. In faith, in love, in fortitude, in obedience: nowhere did he disappoint, nowhere come short of the most exacting standard. He was "a very perfite gentil knight." And he is given to me for my rebuke, my stimulus, my pattern.

May 27.

THE FOREIGNER IS THE BETTER MAN.

"*And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over.*"—2 SAM. XV. 22.

HITHERTO, in this sore crisis of his life, David's attitude has been that of one who is resigned and subdued and willing to suffer. So far it is a good attitude. But, over and above, there is in his bearing more that a suggestion of discouragement, of melancholy, of spiritlessness. Ittai's manliness and self-sacrifice and friendliness and religion touch him like a bracing wind, and rouse him again to his better self. In his Valley of Achor they open for him the door of hope. He accepts the service which is so chivalrously given; and, when he accepts it, his step becomes more buoyant, and his eyes burn with new confidence and joy.

So the stranger teaches God's child not to despond. And what a service that is! To me seasons of calamity and desolation come, when, in my individual life or in the church of Christ or in the world outside, it seems as if there were no possibility of the kingdom of righteousness escaping catastrophe, and far less of its triumph over its adversaries. I am on the brink of a kind of atheism, the atheism which has lost sight of the omnipotence of the King of kings. "Money lost," a German proverb says, "is little lost; honour lost is much lost; but heart lost is all lost." And he renders me an untold benefit who reminds me that, as surely as there is a God, so surely

those who trust in Him and walk in obedience to Him must conquer in the end of the stormy day.

The Gittite's *As the Lord liveth* brought back to David's brooding and downcast soul an inspiration he was forgetting. "The Lord liveth!" he repeated to himself. "Then I will say good-bye to my foolish and faithless misgivings. I will walk through the shadows of death, and I will fear no evil. I will anticipate the golden morning whose dawn cannot be far distant. Thou, Lord, my Lord, alone makest me to dwell in safety." Ah, let me thank God for the ministry of a friend, whose simpler trust recovers me from my cold and shivering unbelief. Let me keep near to my heart those who are very sure of the Lord of life and strength and love. I have no such indispensable brothers as these.

David was really a greater man than Ittai, although he was not so great in this emergency. But when the foreigner rose higher than he did, he showed his wisdom and his grandeur in his humble alacrity to learn from him, and thus to weave more consistency and more completeness into his own character. *He that is greatest among you*, Jesus said, *let him be least of all and servant of all*, servant of all in magnanimous readiness to receive the truth and the help which reach him from others. I hope that such meekness and teachableness will be mine. I hope I shall always remember that this is the way of escape from my imperfections, of victory over my weaknesses, and of progress towards the light and peace of God.

May 28.

MAN'S WEAKNESS LEANING UPON GOD.

"But the Lord said unto me. Say not, I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee."—JER. i. 7.

FREQUENTLY Jeremiah's spirit is cast down; and the burden laid on him seems too heavy to carry; and there are darkness and trouble in his soul. He enlists my interest by his outbursts of irrepressible emotion. He speaks to my heart by his "droppings of warm tears." When God called him to special peril and toil, he saw such difficulties in the way.

There was his youth. *Ah, Lord God!* he cried, *behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.* This lad in his teens, whose words carry no weight, who has no deep well of ideas in his mind and no multitudinous thoughts clamouring for utterance,—he needs, he thinks, to sit at God's feet a long while yet, rather than to stand and prophesy on God's behalf before princes and people. It continues to be a source of trouble. It was only yesterday that I gave my heart to Him; I must wait for riper years and larger wisdom before I become His ambassador. But it is written that He chooses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. And is it written again, that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, with their artless language, He perfects His praise.

Then there was his upbringing. He was a member of the priestly order. And priests and prophets seldom sympathised. The former

were conservative, the latter radical, exposing abuses and demanding reformation. But God discovers His instruments in the least promising surroundings. And Jeremiah's priesthood was of the best type. He identified himself with others. He bore their sins and sorrows. He was a forerunner of the merciful and faithful High Priest. Over unfriendly conditions grace triumphs. I cannot serve God, I say, in my home, my neighbourhood, my business. Let me yield myself to Him, and I shall see. The stumbling-blocks are not without but within; and, once these are conquered, climate and environment count for nothing.

There was his temperament, too. He was warm-hearted, and did not like being a censor. He was shrinking and sensitive. But I follow the trembling, clinging, weeping prophet through the persecutions of forty years; and never once does the God to Whom He has surrendered himself permit him to fail. The word in him was like a fire, and he grew weary with forbearing, and he could not stay. I may be a quivering reed; but God can make the reed strong as Jachin and Boaz, the pillars in His temple. I may be a smoking and smouldering taper; but God can cause the taper to shine like one of the lamps of the golden candlestick, and to burn like one of the seraphim before the Throne. There is nothing which the Everlasting Arms cannot accomplish in me and for me.

How omnipotently He removes my fears!

May 29.

DEUTE PROS ME.

"*Come unto Me.*"—MATT. xi. 28.

I AM weary and restless. I pine for something I do not have. And what is this Something? It is Jesus Christ.

Perhaps I am not so sure of that. What I want, I say, is Knowledge. The inmost marrow of my soul longs for truth. I wish to learn, to be wise, to have skill to read those mysteries which are hidden from me now. But does not Christ give me the best knowledge—about the God above me, about the self within me, about sin and salvation, about immortality in front? Or I say: What I want is Joy—to have the cup of life filled to its verge with happiness and satisfaction. And He kindles in the soul "the joy that's aye to last," that of sonship and daughterhood in the family of God. Or again I say: What I want is Power. Mine is the ambition to be a leader in the world's vanguard, and to leave my mark deep on my generation. But there is no power like that which flows from union with Jesus: the power of a life moulded into harmony with His own, the power of the lips which publish the glad good news, the power of the children and servants of the Lord able to do all things in Him Who strengthens them.

Come unto Me, He keeps calling again and again, "and whatever your restlessness may be, I shall quiet it, and change it into rest. I am the solution of all your questions. I am

the harbour of all your voyagings. I am the target of all your desires."

But what is it to *come*? In the great New Dictionary of the English language, this is how they define the word: "Come, an elementary intransitive verb of motion, expressing movement towards or so as to reach the speaker, or the person spoken to, or towards a point where the speaker in thought or imagination places himself, or, when he is not himself in question, towards the person who forms the subject of his narrative. Come is also used merely of the accomplishment of the movement involved in reaching or becoming present at any place or point; and sometimes the entrance upon motion, involved in issuing from a source, is alone or chiefly thought of." Ah, but occasionally wise men darken counsel, and cause me to lose my way in the multitude of their explanations. To come to Jesus is to trust Him simply. It is to be sure that He speaks truth when He says, "I loved and love you." It is to cease looking for knowledge and joy and power elsewhere, and to take them from Him alone.

In the Greek, there is no verb at all, no summons of any sort or any degree to labour and action. There is only the adverb *Deute*, Hither. *Hither to Me!* the Lord invites, Who is so strong and so gracious. As if it were enough that, wherever I am and whatever I am, I should turn eyes and heart round to Him in faith and hope. And then, "'tis done, the great transaction's done." Then He rests in me.

May 30.

REFRESHMENT FOR ALL THIRST.

"*With Him is plenteous redemption.*"—Ps. cxxx. 7.

PLENTEOUS: it is the right epithet for the love of God.

For, after pardon, and besides pardon, how many are the boons which He bestows!—it would be hard to write out their inventory and catalogue. There is restoration to the place which I have lost; I am a child afresh in the family of the Father, with the child's portion and privilege and training and wealth of affection and care. There is the renewal of my nature more and more, until God Himself is my chief joy and His service my master-passion; everything would be in vain without this. There is a divine succour in the frequently recurring temptations and afflictions of my life; so that, by a more blessed alchemy than that which laboured to change lead into gold, these are transmuted from enemies into helpers and friends. There is the inward and hidden fellowship of my Lord with the soul; by His Holy Spirit He maintains a separate and purifying and fruitful communion with me; "whoever feels not the warm gale and gentle ventilation of this Spirit," declares Sir Thomas Browne, "I dare not say he lives; for truly, without this, to me there is not heat under the tropic, nor any light though I dwell in the body of the sun." And there is the assurance of the everlasting future, the one Sabbath of eternity deep and wide:

Yet one pang searching and sore,
And then Heaven for evermore ;
Yet one moment awful and dark,
Then safety within the Veil and the Ark ;
Yet one effort by Christ His grace,
Then Christ for ever face to face.

All this, and much more than this, are contained in *plenteous redemption* : all that an infinite God can devise and send, and all that my capacious and immortal soul can welcome and assimilate. But am I welcoming it, I whom He has forgiven and led into His house ? Am I growing in the grace and the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour ? Am I adding gift to gift, experience to experience, treasure to treasure ? If my Christianity is languid, anæmic, ineffective, I am not straitened in my God ; the scarcity, the thirst, the feebleness, the ungirt loin and the unlit lamp are due to my own neglect. I do not come often enough, and expectantly enough, to *the place of broad rivers and streams*. I must live in more continuous faith on Him Who supplies all my need.

I hear sometimes of the world's millionaires, that they have small enjoyment in their wealth, being dogged continually by the dread of losing it all and of dying in beggary. It seems a strange hallucination, an unreasonable melancholy. But let me not repeat it in the spiritual sphere. With God's great wealth made over to me, let me not drag out a mendicant and starveling life. That were a worse fatuity than the other.

May 31.

THE PERFECT LOVE.

"*The love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"—Rom. viii. 39.

NO love stoops like this. It abandoned place and prospects and power, to get near me. It travelled from heaven to earth. The distance was not material only, or circumstantial; it was moral. God, pure and holy, chose voluntarily to make His home with me a sinner. And the sole qualification I need to commend myself to Him is not my conviction of worth but my conviction of worthlessness, my knowledge that I am devoid of goodness and beauty. Then, when I confess myself penniless, He will invest me with His treasures. He banishes no self-destroyed and forlorn and penitent man outside the pale of His grace. His love stoops.

No love suffers like this. The test of affection is its willingness to meet sacrifice and pain; but never has any affection stood the test like the love of God in Christ Jesus. "It is certain," the author of *The Imitation* writes, "that not for one hour was our Lord without the anguish of His passion." And at last He made the supreme offering of His life for me. Such bitterness, such dereliction, such sorrow unspeakable, there were in my Savour's death. For me He bore on Calvary the hiding of His Father's face. It is an unapproachable pre-eminence of grief. It is a horror of great darkness I may not pierce. His love suffers.

No love gives like this. Love is always giving. Sometimes it dedicates a cathedral, sometimes two mites which make one farthing: it is the motive behind the gift which is the essential thing. But when was there human love with such wealth to bestow, and such willinghood to communicate it, as God's love in Jesus Christ? In simple fact He imparts to me Himself, nothing less, nothing poorer. I am *filled unto all the fulness of God.* I receive every perfection of His nature which my heart is capable of knowing and welcoming. And the most unholy, the most tempted, the most despairing, cannot desire anything more sufficient. His love gives.

And no love lasts like this. The truest and tenderest earthly love says to its beloved, what Charles Kingsley says on his tombstone in Eversley Churchyard: *Amavimus, amamus, amabimus.* It is sure that death is naught. And yet too often, even on this side of the grave, doubts insinuate themselves, and suspicions arise, and my covenants are snapped and broken. It is not so with the love of my God and His Christ. Neither things present nor things to come, the demands of to-day and the contingencies of to-morrow, chill that great heart. God's attachments are like Himself, eternal and unchangeable. His love lasts.

Does it not deserve my *whole spirit and soul and body,* all I have and all I am? Nothing is stranger, and nothing more sad, than that, confronted with it and bathed in it, I should be so indifferent, so forgetful, so cold.

June.

Some one mows the grass, and frees
Salt and sweet of hidden seas,
Morning freshness, fragrances :

Such refreshment as on wings
Home the delicious west wind brings,
From the Atlantic founts and springs.

As the green veins bleed to white,
Coolness of the scented night,
Dew and waters out of sight.

Dear as the wild rain upon
The dry earth, parched as a stone—
Soul of the grass goes forth alone.

Now they roll the grass, and oh !
Souls of all the flowers below
In a sweetness rise and go,

As a martyr whom they break
Chants through his last pang and ache,
Lauds and matins from his rack.

If Thy will upon me press,
Bid me praise Thy heaviness
In my ultimate distress ;

And, like the mown grass in swathe,
Praise Thee with my dying breath,
And smell sweetest in my death !

KATHARINE TYNAN.

I read an additional test of the genuineness of my Christianity in the three names by which the ancient people of God were known. These names I must wear.

They were Hebrews. *It is the Pilgrim name. They were men who had crossed the River—men who had passed over, from beyond the great flood of the Euphrates, into the midst of those who looked on them as aliens. I have need of the Hebrew separateness and strangerhood. Not through Pharisaism and exclusiveness, but because I look at life and death and eternity and God with other eyes, I ought to be different from the citizens of the world. My very language should bewray me, because often it is couched in accents remote from theirs. It is the language of praise, of prayer, of enquiry into truth, of entreaty with others for Christ's sake. It indicates another origin behind, and another destiny in front. It is the sacred tongue of the saints. Now, I wonder whether mine is the Hebrew name.*

They were Jews. *It is the National name. It is the patriotic badge. It proclaimed the fact that Abraham's sons and daughters were no Gentiles, but members of the commonwealth on which the richest gifts of heaven had been poured. When I am God's, do I not gain incalculably more than I lose? In His theocracy, such spiritual liberties are mine! such a noble code of laws governs me! such guards and sentries keep watch over my life! such a desirable fellowship I enjoy! such a future of privilege is reserved for me! I wonder whether I am proud of my fatherland, and refuse to brook the thought of doing dishonour to it. "Spartam nactus es; hanc exorna," the Lacedæmonians told their sons. But the peerless city of God imposes on me responsibilities more searching and more solemn.*

They were Israelites. *It is the Covenant name; and thus it is the sublimest of the three. It depicts the men and women with whom, as with Jacob at Peniel, God has linked Himself in an intimate union never to be broken. Has He humbled me, teaching me that the powers on which I relied most are of no account? Have I clung to Him as my Saviour, with the earnestness that refuses to let Him go except He blesses me? On my ears and into my heart has the assurance of His love fallen, a message for me alone? And then have I gone on my way, to please Him, to walk in faith and obedience with Him, to live and die for Him? Ah! the secret of the Lord is with His Israelites; and I pray that I may carry the transcendent title.*

God diadem me with all the three names.

June 1.

HEAVEN'S GORGEOUS ROOF.

"*The heavens declare the glory of God.*"—Ps. xix. 1.

HERE is constant preaching. *Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.* I have the glory of the sun, and then I have the glory of the stars. Month after month the bright messengers publish God's majesty, His wisdom, His faithfulness, His care. "At the command of the Holy One they will stand in their order, and never faint in their watches." They spoke to Abraham and Moses in the world's infancy, and they speak to me in the end of the age. Do they not witness to the abidingness of my Lord and Father? Do they not rebuke me for imagining that His power and grace can fail? "I saw Eternity the other night," Henry Vaughan sings, "like a great ring of pure and endless light." Let me too see Eternity. It will dispel my short-sighted and unbelieving alarms. It will teach me to be calm.

Here is silent preaching. *They have no speech nor language; their voice cannot be heard.* The "kingly brilliancy of Sirius," and yellow Capella, and Aldebaran fiery red —how noiseless they are, and yet how eloquent! They tell me that often the strongest forces are the stillest. God's accents do their conquering work not in whirlwind and earthquake and thunder half so frequently as in the whisper of gentle quietness. His Spirit may arouse me by storm and tempest; but

more probably He will call me into the regenerated life as softly as the mother calls her sleeping child from slumber in the morning of another day. I, also, would crave the tender and tranquil persuasiveness of the firmament. Without parade or stir or self-advertisement let me speak the good news and live the Christly life.

Here is catholic preaching. *Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* Wherever I am, east and west, I may hearken to the testimony of the noonday and midnight skies. Wherever I am, the blue canopy of God's greatness and God's kindness enshadows me. Nowhere does He leave and forsake His child. Europe is His, and Asia, and Africa, and America. Life is His, with its constantly recurring wants and its mercies which do not cease. Death is part of His dominion; there, too, to the hearts which confide in Him, He is Moon and Sun. This world, many-coloured, changeful, brimful of infinite interest, He guides and governs for my good. And over the next world, more manifestly still, His kinghood will be established, and He will be all in all. Everywhere I am within His remembrance and His rule.

The star has its Gospel for me, but, far more truly and blessedly, He to Whom a star conducted Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar as He lay in the manger of Bethlehem. Christ's preaching and Christ Himself fill my heart to overflowing.

June 2.

HE THAT IS DOWN NEEDS FEAR NO FALL.

"*Not I, but Christ.*"—GAL. ii. 20.

IT is the one rule for me—a rule which smites and heals, beggars and exalts, strips me of everything and then turns my despair into confidence and my defeat into victory.

At the outset, I am abased, and my confidence is slain. God will not work His miracles for a self-sufficient soul. He has no tolerance for the song, "Glory to man in the highest, for man is the master of things!" He demands an emptied heart. He descends with His bounties to a people poor and needy, hungering and thirsting after His righteousness alone. It is the lesson I learn at the crisis of conversion, when this is my confession, "Nothing in my hands I bring." It is the truth I must master more and more, if I am to have new tides of quickening and power: the Holy Spirit blesses the man who is a lover of the Valley of Humiliation, and a dweller there. "Cromwell," writes Mr. Chesterton—"Cromwell, according to Carlyle, was a strong man; according to Cromwell, he was a weak one." That is how it happens with all whom God enriches. I cease to be a hero to myself. I am a receiver now, not a giver; a suppliant, not a prince any more. I depend, for birth and life and growth and fruit-bearing, on Him Who begins in me, and Who performs, His own good work.

But if my vanity is visited with its death-blow, my expectation of the completest enfranchisement is begotten. All things are attainable by him who reposes an unreserved faith in Christ. Under the date, "Sabbath, July 4th, 1880," Dr. Andrew Bonar relates in his Diary that he had just had a great view of Revelation xxi. 6—Christ standing at the fountain of the water of life, and giving forth blessing "δωρεάν," freely. Love in its fulness, life more abundant, the powers of the Almighty Spirit of God, revival in the family and in the congregation and throughout the land: will He not bestow every one of them? "If I wonder, He will smile and say, δωρεάν. I have no argument but one to use, and that is His most gracious word, δωρεάν. When I get the crown from Him, the crown of righteousness, δωρεάν will be written upon it." Personal holiness, social regeneration, missionary progress, the conquest of the world, the hastening of the glory yet to be revealed: why am I sure of them? Why, but because all things are possible to Jesus Christ.

He that is humble ever shall have God to be his Guide. He in whom Self is smitten with a mortal wound, and Christ lives and reigns, goes from grace to grace. So—

Make me like a little child,
Of my strength and wisdom spoiled,
Seeing only in Thy light,
Walking only in Thy might,
Leaning on Thy loving breast,
Where a weary soul may rest.

June 3.

CONCERNING FRIENDSHIP.

"Jonathan arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God."—1 SAM. xxiii. 16.

IF a man has not a friend, he may "quit the stage of life." And the friend I covet for my own is such a companion and brother as Jonathan was to David.

He will have a character which breathes power and nobleness into mine. Can he *strengthen my hand in God?*—there is the question I must ask. It is not necessary that he should be brilliant; but it will be disastrous if he is not good. I must be able to consult him about the deepest things of the soul. I must think of him thankfully when I am in the society of Father and Son and Spirit. In my imaginations and forecasts of the incorruptible inheritance, he must be there. "Mounted high through the dear might of Him that walked the waves": young John Milton wrote wistfully about young Edward King, the Lycidas who died and rose and ascended before his prime. About my friend I must be certain that, one day, he will mount high through Christ's dear might.

He will talk with me, now and then, about those things which are unseen and eternal. So, I fancy, the Hebrew lads did, that unforgettable morning in the wood. "A man waxeth wiser," Lord Bacon maintains, "more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation." Perhaps something might be said in refutation

of the aphorism ; but an hour's discourse about God and Christ and the life everlasting makes me wise indeed. John Bunyan's pilgrims, as they journeyed on, discussed the dangers and the gladnesses of the way, and the corruption of their hearts, and the redemption of the King. I shall be thrice-fortunate, if these are the topics in which my friend takes pleasure ; as he speaks with me, Jesus Himself will draw near, and our two hearts will burn.

He will give me more than sympathy ; He will give me service. How much Jonathan did for David ! How much St. Paul did for his fellow-soldiers in the good fight, and how they repaid him to the uttermost ! Phœbe was his *succourer* ; Aquila and Priscilla would have *laid down their necks* for his sake ; Urbanus was his *helper* ; Gaius was his *host.* Sometimes by a grasp of the hand, sometimes by a word of comfort, sometimes by taking my part when I am misunderstood, sometimes by putting himself to trouble for me, my friend will aid me actively and potently. And daily he will besiege the Throne with cries to God on my behalf. Is there anything I should desire more ? I will not plead. " Love me in thy gorgeous airs, when the world has crowned thee," half so much as " Love me kneeling at thy prayers, with the angels round thee."

If I have a friend who is and does all this, how can I possibly give him too much in return ? His comradeship not only confers an inestimable treasure, but lays on me an endless obligation. I must repay his grace with mine.

June 4.

PRAYING HEART AND SHINING FACE.

"*As He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered.*"—LUKE ix. 29.

IF Christ's Hermon glory was ushered in by prayer, so must mine be.

There is the transfiguration of experience. For many, experience is full of pain. Their existence is painted in black, or at best, in dead and cheerless grey. They are continually being disillusioned, thrown into the depths, thwarted in purpose and hope. But there are others whose experience is entirely different. They have frequent days of heaven on earth—times when Christian conversation has helped, quiet seasons spent over the Bible or a good book, sacramental Sabbaths, occasions of Christian service, morning hours when they awake to feel that God's mercies are over all His works, evening hours when Christ enters their room with His salutation of peace and says, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* What will secure for me an experience so radiantly transfigured? What, but simple and vital prayer.

There is the transfiguration of character. I am changed into the image of my great and stainless Lord, I who was unthankful and evil. Bit by bit the blessed process goes on; as first the orchards of Sicily and Spain yield up their treasures, and by and by the turn comes of France and Germany and Britain. So holiness spreads gradually through my being, once I have surrendered it to Christ.

conquering the least promising parts, till everything is gracious and mature, and the new creation is complete. And what helps the work forward? Prayer—prayer for deliverance from sin's subtle snares and entangling chains, for deeper distrust of self and more unflagging watchfulness against the enemy, for the perpetual abiding within me of the Lord my God.

And there is the transfiguration of heaven. *When He shall appear*, St. John says, *we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.* At last, in one splendid instant, no longer slowly but immediately, no longer partially but wholly, I shall be satisfied with His likeness. Moses had to stay forty days and forty nights in the Mount of God before his features shone; but Jesus had simply to lift His desire to His Father, and the divinity in Him sprang to the light of day. Thus swift and complete is the perfecting kept for me. And can I prepare for it? Yes, by prayer. By looking out for my Lord's returning feet. By beseeching Him that He will hasten the wheels of His chariot. By the entreaty that I may be with Him where He is, to behold His beauty.

It may be a still earlier transfiguration which I need. Have I, who had not obtained mercy, become an heir of forgiveness and peace through faith in Christ crucified for me? If I fain would be certain of it, I have but to pray, and to persevere in prayer, until the abundant answer makes rich my soul. He who wrestles with God—God's glory smites him on the face.

June 5.

ABOUT LOVING GOD.

"*I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength.*"—Ps. xviii. 1.

CORDIALLY do I love Thee, O Lord, my Strength, the Hebrew singer cried. In his case, as in Mary's of Bethany, one deep love superseded all other. And I ask that it may be so with me.

Should not mine be the love of the new-born soul? The child's affection for mother and father is there almost as soon as the little one opens his eyes, and discovers by what a warm atmosphere he is surrounded. It is natural, instinctive, spontaneous, irresistible. Simply because he is in the family, he loves. And there is a family spiritual and divine. If I have been brought into its sheltering and sanctifying shadow, I must love. I will not be a day nor an hour within the household, till I am setting God above my chiefest joy. I cannot help it, and I have no wish to help it. It is the law of the home.

Should not mine be the love of the thankful heart? I picture a slave, whom a strong arm has enfranchised. I was myself this slave. And God sent His Son to liberate me; and although the work led Christ to the Cross, neither Father nor Son drew back from the dreadful end. This, too, was but the beginning. I have a daily forgiveness, and a perpetual guidance, and the best answers to my prayers, and the admonition and comfort of the Holy Ghost. God bears my burdens, and His very

chastening is my wealth and peace. Certainly He should receive from me the love of a thankful heart.

And should not mine be the love of the sympathising spirit? Xenophon and Plato and Crito and Phædo, with whom Socrates walked and talked in Athens long centuries ago: how they reverenced him, and caught his great language, and looked out on men and things with his eyes! My love for God must make me a scholar in His school. I must drink in His teaching, and grow up into His likeness. It is a serious thing to say, *Heartily do I love Thee, O Lord.* It means that I depart from iniquity, and think on whatsoever is seemly and venerable. God is Light, and "in this Light of Life I'll walk till travelling days are done."

And should not mine be the love of the surrendered life? The leader marshals his men around him. Because he calls them, they are willing to embrace peril and wounds and death. They have given themselves absolutely to this dear master of theirs. Is there not room and to spare for the larger exercise of a love so unresting, so self-forgetting, so desirous to serve? I have too little of it. I should count all things loss that I may help the cause of God. He thirsts for followers who will dare anything, for soldiers who will fight His battles, for lovers and friends who will reproduce His mind and carry on His work. Let me be one.

It all begins when I can say, *He first loved me.* There is the impulse, there the incentive.

June 6.

O LIFE, NOT DEATH, FOR WHICH I PANT!

"*I am the life.*"—JOHN xiv. 6.

THREE pictures rise before my thought, as I linger over the familiar and far-reaching words.

For, first, I see the picture of a Courthouse. A great trial has been going forward. The judge is on the bench. The jury have brought in their decision. The prisoner in the dock is sentenced to die. But the judge speaks again: "You deserve to suffer, but the King has pardoned you, and you are free." And thus the criminal passes from the gloom of death into newness of life. It is a symbol of how God, the righteous Judge, addresses me. I merit His condign punishment, yet He sends me His pardon—a pardon sealed with blood, as the Covenanters in the Greyfriars signed and sealed their bond, the blood of Christ His Son. It cost an infinite price, and it carries a full forgiveness. I believe the good news, and I am no longer a prisoner at the bar and in the dungeon; I have entered into a glorious liberty. Jesus is my Life.

Next, I see the picture of a Garden. It is early summer. For months the garden was bare. There were no flowers, no buds, no greenery of grass and leaf. But the pearly snowdrops came, and the crocuses followed in robes of gold and purple and virgin white, and soon the daffodils lifted their trumpets, and now there is the bravery of carnations

and lilies and roses. The dead garden has blossomed into many-tinted beauty. This, also, Christ bestows on me, by the unspeakable gift of His Spirit exchanging my unholiness for purity, my feebleness for strength, my winter for summer. My barren heart and my weak character He decks with the flowers and fruits of heavenly grace, compelling the desert to shine with the lamps of the narcissus, as Dr. Cheyne tells me I must translate the winsome promise of Isaiah. Is not Jesus my Life?

Last, I see the picture of a Grave. But it is untenanted and empty. It is the borrowed sepulchre in which my Lord lay down to rest, when His mighty redeeming work was ended. In the grey twilight of the third morning, He rose a Victor from the dark domain. And what He did for Himself He will do for me, who lean on Him. His voice will penetrate the secret of my grave. His power will quicken me into the endless vigour of the better country. His love will reunite the body and the spirit which have been sundered for a brief space. And where He is, my loves and I will be beside Him. Together, we shall walk with Him in white; together, drink with Him the wine of the Kingdom. When our one soul understands

> The great word which makes all things new.
> When earth breaks up and heaven expands.
> How will the change strike me and you
> In the house not made with hands?

For ever and for ever Jesus is my Life.

June 7.

MANY SERVANTS, ONE MASTER.

"*Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.*"—Rom. xvi. 12.

THEY were three elect ladies in the far-off years when the Church of Christ was a new thing in the hard pagan world. It is good for me to tarry in their company.

I see the sphere in which their Christian works were carried on. All three laboured *in the Lord*. In friendship with the Lord; for they did not talk about faith without possessing it, and they did not task themselves in the drudgery of a Master with Whom they had never come into loving contact. In dependence on the Lord; for they kept up daily communion, and they drew from Him strength and wisdom and humility and patience to meet every vexation and perplexity. In imitation of the Lord; for was it not their ambition in all that they did to copy His quietness and composure, His earnestness and zeal, His kindness and winning grace? And in anticipation of the Lord; for they expected to meet Him soon, and very anxious they were that no undertone of reproach should mar His welcome. Ah! it is a good land in which to toil. May it be the sphere where I dwell every day of all my years.

And what shall I say about their labour itself? Probably they were slaves, the chattels of a proud Roman mistress. But because they were believers too, they fulfilled their menial duties

as in the sight of Christ. And they were perpetually on the outlook, also, for some distinctively spiritual service which they might render. Jesus is to rule my week-day as well as my Sabbath, and in my commonest employment I must seek for His assistance and I must plead for His approval. But is there nobody to whom I can say a word directly on His behalf, no child I may teach, no sorrowful soul to whom I can give one of God's great promises? Surely there is.

Or I may think of the differences among these old-world labourers. There is the matter of nationality; Tryphena and Tryphosa seem to have been of Greek birth, while Persis may have drawn her name from Persia, far in the East. There is the matter of age; two continue to be active and busy—they *labour*; it is evening with the other, and she sits with folded hands—she *laboured*. There is the matter of capacity; the beloved Persis attempted and accomplished *much*, while her sisters with less opportunity and smaller endowment must lag behind. So I gather that there is room for all in the King's vineyard. If I am young, let me, while I fill my own place, thank God for the great deeds of those who went before me. If I can do much, let me remember that Christ enlists many who can bring Him but a light gleaning; He "finds their single talent well employed."

The Master is the best of Masters; and have I a willing mind to serve Him? Let me claim a family kinship with Tryphena and Tryphosa. Let me walk in the shining light of Persis.

June 8.

THE MUNITIONS OF ROCKS.

"He set my feet upon a rock."—Ps. xl. 2.

IT is a peaceable habitation, and a sure dwelling, and a quiet resting-place.

For the rock suggests salvation. It speaks of Christ, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me." The metaphor, no doubt, is imperfect; no one symbol can explain and unfold Him. He is both the Rescuer Who takes me from my hazard and helplessness, and the Rock on which I am placed, secure from the blast of the wind, from the pitiless hunger of the waves, from the mire where there is no foothold. When I was at the point of despair, He revealed Himself. He drew near through the promises of His Gospel and the calls of His Spirit. He laid His hand on me, and freed me from death, and hid me in Himself and His ability to save to the uttermost.

And the rock suggests assurance. The great crags are steadfast, and the man whose home is among them feels the ground immovable under him. He is kept in perfect peace. So it ought to be with me, if I am in Christ Jesus. I should bid good-bye to alarms. I should be persuaded that He can guard that which I have committed to Him. Perhaps I am poor in this sense of assurance. I live in a palace with the tremors of a captive. I am close to Almightiness, and I have no settled conviction of security. Let my faith be simpler, and in Christ I shall have peace—peace like the hush

of the hills, or like the silence of a stormless sky.

The rock suggests eminence. When my feet are set on it, I occupy a conspicuous place. I am a pattern of Christ's long-suffering. I am a monument of God's love. That will mean that in me there are very apparent evidences of the Saviour's presence and work. I must be lifted above common standards. My righteousness must be comprehensive, thorough, finer than the world's best virtues. An epistle of Jesus I am intended to be. As a star is separate from the firmament, as a rainbow is separate from the cloud, as a rock is separate from the plain out of which it rises, so I should stand separate by my Lord's grace.

And the rock suggests everlastingness. The cliffs of Palestine looked down on Abraham, and the sinful Canaanites, and the victories of Joshua and David, and the long strings of bondmen led into Assyria and Babylon, and the life and death of the Saviour. And they are unaltered still. But when I am Christ's, mine is a better eternity than that of the mountains, which abide while towns decay, and empires crumble, and men fall and die. His forgiveness can never be revoked. His sanctification goes on year after year. His love does not diminish. His gifts are without repentance, not to be called back, not to be snatched away. He endures, and I endure in Him.

For the strength of these Hills I praise God. How supremely nobler they are than Snowdon and Schiehallion, Alp and Appennine, Carmel and Tabor!

June 9.

AFTER TWO DAYS.

"After two days He will revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight."—Hos. vi. 2.

NEW TESTAMENT realities gleam through the ancient verse.

I behold a Saviour comforted and victorious. How was Jesus so sure that, after dying, on the third day He would rise again? It was because it was declared in the prophets. It was because Hosea, and God behind Hosea, had sent Him an assurance of it that was explicit and invincible. O blessed consolation of the Scriptures to the trembling soul of the troubled Christ! O sure word, flashing like a star through the night, to uphold my Redeemer, so eager to suffer for me, and yet quivering in every fibre as He passed into the cloud! God's *I will raise Thee up* was His confidence and His joy. And His faith was not put to shame.

I behold a church springing into fresh life. Sometimes the church of Jesus becomes cold, and life in her veins runs low. She does not hold His truth with intensity, nor commend Him by the heavenliness of her character, nor burn with love for souls, nor impress the world with the sense of something mystical and unearthly. What must I do in this sad winter of the Christian society? I must take the old promise of Hosea, and turn it into a prayer, and cry, "O my God, *after two days* do Thou revive us." And He will. According to the mighty

power which he wrought in Christ, He will end the Church's torpor and solitude and death.

I behold a soul dying in order to live. The dark day of Calvary, and the two days in Joseph's tomb, and the morning of the resurrection: they are to have their counterparts and correspondences in my own history. I wish to glorify God; and how is it to be done? I must build an altar and bring a sacrifice. The sacrifice of the sin I love best, of the habit which hampers me, of the dearest idol I have known, of myself with my plans and pride and prepossessions. Through death and the grave I must go in fellowship with my Lord. And in the third day God will raise me up. When I lose my life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, He restores it, multiplied, in the fashion of His arithmetic, a hundredfold.

I behold a great assembly before the Throne. Some of the Fathers had a curious conceit. They said that a thousand of my years are as one day to God, and that, when two thousand years have passed, and the morning of the third thousand breaks, the angel's trumpet will sound and the dead will live. It is idle to discuss the fancy; but this I know, that the period through which the bodies of Christians will rest in their graves is a fixed period. It is longer than Christ's time of repose, but it is as definitely determined. On God's third day, whenever it arrives, the sunrise will stream into the chamber called Peace, and in His sight His people will live the endless and perfect life.

And let all this inspire and rejoice me meanwhile.

June 10.

BONDMEN AND FRIENDS.

"*But the servants which drew the water knew.*"—JOHN ii. 9.

THEY were happy slaves, these humble folk who helped at the marriage-feast.

They were servants of the King. It is wonderful how Jesus looks to men and women to co-operate with Him. He was the real Worker that day; His power transmuted the water into wine; yet He kept Himself in the background. The servants fill the jars, and the servants draw forth the contents, and He is scarcely seen. Still He asks me to be His coadjutor; and although in spiritual matters I can do nothing and He must do everything, He gives me prominence and praise as if all depended on me. There never was so kindly a Master. Let me obey as heartily as the old bondmen did, who filled the vessels to the brim, and then drew forth the liquid unquestioningly at Christ's command. Many a time His injunctions baffle me; but my one duty is to do *whatsoever He saith*. So I shall discover that He makes the impossible attainable and easy.

They were drawers of water for the King. And water, in the divine sphere, is the emblem of two things: of the Gospel of salvation, which satisfies my thirst and refreshes my weary heart; and of the Spirit of God, Who comes to dwell in me as a Well *springing up into everlasting life*. It is Christ's desire that I should draw this water first for my own need; for here I have to leave the servants, who never thought

of themselves when they dipped their pitchers into the great jars. I shall not succeed in commending the Gospel and the Spirit to others until I know their vivifying power in my personal life. But afterwards it is Christ's desire that I should take the vitalising draught to the thirsty — careless, anxious, tempted, heart-broken men. There is no predicting for what miraculous ends He will use His lowly instruments and messengers. In His hand a reed is a sword.

For they were also intimates of the King— these domestic slaves in Cana. "The servants which drew the water *knew*." They caught it in the act of flushing into ruddy wine. They were admitted to the secret that Jesus hid from the governor of the feast and from the rest. Conversion is a mystery to the world; but the humble saint, who has been praying for and with a human soul, has the mystery unravelled: he sees the Lord step in. The calmness of a Christian in overwhelming trial is a marvel philosophy cannot explain; but the believing friend, who ministered to his stricken comrade, understands the victory: he beholds Christ at work. The transformation of the heathen is ascribed by many to secondary causes; but the missionary knows better: he watches the Master of the harvest as He ripens the golden grain. Who shares the Saviour's task understands the Saviour's heart.

Let me be the bondman who is also the friend. No earthly rank or princely title but seems slight and empty in comparison.

June 11.

A LITTLE STRENGTH.

"*But a feeble folk.*"—PROV. XXX. 26.

IT is not easy to have only a little strength, and yet to remain steadfast and to abound always in the work of the Lord. Conies, *but a feeble folk*, have an excuse for despondency not to be granted the lion, *mightiest among beasts.*

Sometimes my sense of weakness comes from confining circumstances. There is a depressing word which I use too often, the word "only." It would be my honour and my delight to carry the message of Christ far afield to the heathen; but I have only a few children in the home or in the school for whom to care and with whom to be patient. I would readily consecrate to the cause of God an entire fortune; but I can only contribute one or two pence. In disappointment and regret I utter my "only."

Or sometimes my sense of weakness comes from uncertain health. Trophimus was left at Miletum sick. He wished to fight at the great missionary's side. He longed to help Paul in building the temple of the Church. But God said No, and beckoned him away to loneliness and suffering. Trophimus has his successors. In the household of faith many devoted servants know the same crook in the lot; their Master bids them come apart to a desert place and rest awhile. And perhaps I am of their number.

Or sometimes my sense of weakness comes

from the constitution of my soul. It was not William Cowper merely who confessed, "I was a stricken deer"; others have been cruelly wounded by the archers. It was not Thomas simply who hugged his doubts to his breast, and could not escape their tyranny; others walk through the gloomy wood which no ray of sunshine penetrates. I may be one of the melancholians, vexed by crowding alarms, for whom there are "no roses but only thorns to-day."

And often my sense of weakness comes from indwelling sin. If I were perfected in purity, how much I could accomplish! But the Canaanite lingers in the house of the Lord. The law in the members continues to make war on the better law in the mind. My inconsistencies, my stumblings, my spasmodic and fickle enthusiasms, my guilty truces with the world and the flesh and the devil—these diminish mournfully the value of the witness I bear and the work I do. *This body of death* is tied about my neck.

But the remedy for my Deadly Sorrow lies in turning my attention away from myself to my glorious King. He is so strong, so considerate and tender, so thoroughly acquainted with my necessities, so determined to employ me for His glory, that "the lowly heart which leans on Him is happy anywhere," and can help others to be happy too. The more infirm I am in myself, the more honour will He have in equipping and empowering me. The conies are but a feeble folk; yet—yet—make they their houses in the Rock.

June 12.

GOD HAS MY EYES AND EARS AND LIPS.

"*The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*"—2 COR. iv. 6.

IN my New Testament day it is no anthropomorphism to talk of God's face; it is no figure of speech: it is the expression of glorious fact. God has clothed Himself in my bodily nature that He might save my forfeited soul.

His face, as I see it in Jesus Christ, has a most winning attractiveness. Nineteen centuries since, its magnetism drew the leper, the Syrian mother, the woman who was a sinner. And the march of generations has not blunted its compassions. Long acquaintance with my destitution has not made it cynical and hard. Why do I not rise from my daily tasks, my troubles, my tears, my wearinesses, into the light of this Face? I shall never tire the patient Heart of which it is the index. And to walk in its presence is the secret of victory over the world, of strength for work, of progress in grace.

But God's Face, as Jesus Christ reveals it, is lined with pain. Can I ever forget that it was damp and chill with the dews of the night in Gethsemane; that it was struck and spat upon at the mockery of a trial; that it was crowned with thorns on the Cross; that over it the white napkin was laid in Joseph's grave? Such sorrows befell God's countenance, the Ever-blessed God, round Whose throne angels and archangels had sung their praises. Do I mourn

because I abased and pierced the peerless Sufferer? Do I rejoice that I have peace through His shame and life through His death? For my healing the features of the Lord God Almighty were thus cruelly marred.

God's face, disclosed by Jesus Christ, is invested with new glories to-day. Years after its humiliation, it shone on the beloved disciple *as the sun shines in its strength.* I hope to gaze on its royalties by and by. John Howe speculates as to whether the saints may not enjoy some outward manifestation of the Father in the future—"some umbrage of Him as a man's garments are of the man." But that is all surmise. What is certain is that, beholding Jesus Christ, I shall behold the Father, and shall be both satisfied and made perfect in holiness. To look on the Son is to look on Him Who is God of God and Light of Light; and what an apocalypse that will be!

I trust that I know the supreme Face. Painters have tried to limn it—Dürer and Titian, John Millais and Holman Hunt. But has God shown it to myself, so that I have seen its sorrow and love flow mingled down? There is a legend of how Christ's likeness was cut in an emerald by command of Tiberius, and of how, long afterwards, this emerald became the redemption-price of a captive in Rome. Do I read in the Lord's likeness my redemption-price? When He says, *Seek ye My Face*, does my heart make answer, *Thy Face will I seek?* To find its grace, to live in its smile, to catch its reflection, is the chief good.

June 13.

THE INDIVIDUAL PLAGUE.

"*Every man the plague of his own heart.*"—1 KINGS viii. 38.

LET me consider it: You are wounded and stricken in one way, I in another.

My age has much to do in giving shape and force to my sin. There is youth, with its immoderate desires for pleasure—desires indulged at times till the best strength is stolen away, and the purest and sweetest bloom is lost. There is manhood, with its anxiety about business and its eagerness for gain; hot, engrossing, overweening worldly care occupies the heart. There are older years, with their cravings for praise and deference and honour—hankerings which cling to me long after the dark hair has changed into grey. Every period in life has its own plague.

My temperament, too, may determine the sins to which I am prone. If I am buoyant and excitable, my temptation is to flightiness, to superficiality, to grasp at too many things, to flit from scheme to scheme. If I am slow and calm, not quickly roused, a lover of order and conventionality, my temptation is to sloth and sleepy rest. Or if I am fiery in feeling and swift in movement, my temptation is to jealousy and wilfulness. Or if I am reserved and brooding, my temptation is to unbelief. Every emotion has its own disease haunting it like a ghost.

My surroundings, also, give me a bias towards certain sins. Perhaps I live among

those who are outwardly religious. And then I am satisfied with my good profession, with my decorousness and charity, with the place I fill in the Church and the world. Or perhaps it is quite different; the stars in their courses seem to fight against me. There is a power of inherited constitution, which drags the spirit down. There is a despotism of places and associations. There are chains of habit, more difficult to break than fetters of iron. My circumstances affect my sins.

But the root of the evil is within me, in my heart. It is lacking in right judgment and right sympathy and right force. It is much too ready to respond to the solicitations which those various voices address to it. This is the fountain from which the polluting streams flow into my daily speech and daily life. This is the marshland from which the mephitic vapours rise. I need a right spirit. I need a new nature. I need a clean heart.

How thankful I should be that God can heal the mortal plague! There is the throne of the Father: I cry from my depths, and He listens; He comes to me, and the time is a time of love. There is the Cross of the Son: in the grace of the dying Redeemer there is salvation for tens of thousands. There is the power of the Holy Ghost: conversion is His work, purity His endowment, the perfection of Christ His goal. I cannot lean on God too trustingly. I cannot expect from God too much. My dreams are His facts; my impossibilities are His performances; my despairs are His delights.

June 14.

WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS.

"Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself."—HEB. xii. 3.

THERE is no spectacle so surprising as that of my buffeted and tempest-driven Lord. I would consider what dignity He had. He was the King of earth and heaven; and had He chosen, He might have called twelve legions of angels to His aid: and no man was able to take His life from Him. It was marvellous that One so high should suffer so much. I would consider how gloriously spotless He was. There was nothing negative or cold about His sinlessness; I have to think of diamond and ruby together, the one with its clearness and the other with its glow, if I would understand His perfection. It was strange that One like this should be reviled and hated. I would consider, too, the fierceness of His pains. *Such contradiction of sinners* it was, so long-continued, so unrelenting: antagonism in words—the misrepresentation, the taunt, the slander, the calumny: and bitterer antagonism in deeds—unbelief, hate, enmity, crucifixion. There never was sorrow like unto His sorrow. But because I have only travelled yet round the fringe and edge of my theme, I would consider what inflicted the sharpest anguish on Jesus. He was made a curse for me. The Father lifted up His rod, and visited my punishment on the Child of His heart. This was what drove

Him into the wilderness of dereliction. This was what awakened "Immanuel's orphaned cry." Yet I would consider, also, how brave He proved Himself. He *endured*. There is in the word, Archbishop Trench tells me, "a background of courage." He was not merely submissive, resigned, patient; He was willing, cheerful, gracious, glad. He had the soldier's militant constancy. He had the martyr's joyous readiness for the amphitheatre or the fire or the headsman's axe. My soul, what sight in the universe can rival this?

Let me consider Him, and mourn. I wove the crown of thorns for His brow. I pierced His hands and feet. I broke His heart. Let me consider Him, and trust. He dies not only through my sin but for my salvation; such His grace that He gives Himself for me, such His power that He is able to save me to the uttermost. Let me consider Him, and love. Who deserves my affection as He does? and shall He not have it through life and death and eternity? Let me consider Him, and myself follow Him up His steep ascent. The recollection of His endurance should prevent me from growing wearied and faint in my mind, and should make me ashamed to complain. It ought to yield in me the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Mine is "work enough to watch the Master work, and catch hints of the proper craft, tricks of the fool's true play."

For redemption from death, for comfort in tribulation, for ability to labour and wait and run and fight: this is the one thing needful—to consider Him, and again to consider Him, and perpetually to consider Him.

June 15.

DOMUS DOMINI DUMUS.

"The goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush."—DEUT. xxxiii. 16.

SO God's will is goodwill. Sometimes I am so foolish as to imagine and to say that it is harsh and unlovely. But Moses comprehended better, Moses with whom was the secret of the Lord; and let me be a learner at his feet. God's will is my redemption; and He carries out His purpose by the lowly cradle of Bethlehem and by the stark and shameful Cross of Calvary. God's will is my sanctification; and He means to have me healthy, wholesome, vigorous, every trace of sickness gone, my soul and my body transfigured into the image of Christ's body and soul. God's will is my coronation: that I should be with Jesus where He is. Ah, is it not goodwill beyond dispute and beyond compare?

But God's love may spell sorrow. His presence brought the wilderness acacia a scorching heat and a throbbing blaze. Because He is with me, and because He is Love, I burn. Because He is with me, and because He is Love that cannot be gauged or unfolded, I burn but I am not consumed. He blesses my afflictions; and they rebuke my earthliness, and convince me of sin, and infuse ardour into my prayers, and give me a new idea of His compassions and sympathies, and make me feel Christ very near, and impel me to grasp the promises more firmly, and render me capable of comforting

others. The thorn-tree is unscathed; and I am instructed and crowned by the fires of God.

And God's home is the humblest place. It is not the stately oak, or the royal cedar, or the graceful birch; it is a shrub which has a hard struggle for life among unfriendly rocks and sands. In my house there are push and pressure and a whirl of duties and a multitude of cares, from Monday morning until Saturday night; yet God says, *This is My rest.* In my heart are a crowd of weaknesses and sins; yet He comes to dignify and cleanse, and the heart that enshrines Him grows strong and beautiful. *Domus Domini Dumus*, The bramble-bush is the home of the Lord: I know of no evangel which suits me so well as this.

God's mercies, too, are the best memories. From his old age, with death at hand, Moses goes back in thought and thanksgiving across the gulf of forty years, until he meets again the God Whose temple is the bush. And Samuel never forgot the couch in the tabernacle where the divine voice spoke to him, nor Matthew the tax-gatherer's bench where Jesus found him, nor the woman of Samaria the well where she had her first draught of the water of life, nor Paul the gateway of Damascus. If I am old, I hope that I have these glorious reminiscences. If I am young, I hope that I am laying them up in the chambers of the soul. There are no memories like the mercies of God.

Has not the desert acacia much instruction for my heart? I, too, would draw near its miracle.

June 16.

LET ME GIVE EARNEST HEED.

"Look to yourselves, that . . . ye receive a full reward."—2 JOHN 8 (R.V.).

THIS is not the first of the heart's looks. There is one that goes before it, one that has momentous importance. *Look unto Me*, says God in Jesus Christ, *and be ye saved*. But, once faith and hope and love have been fixed on Him, a second scrutiny succeeds. I must examine myself. For lack of such attention my religion may be feeble and flaccid; and I dare not abate my vigilance. Perhaps I forget that conversion is not all, and that the lifelong process of sanctification must follow the immediate act of forgiveness. "We have no suspicion," says a famous French Protestant, "that pardon is not the restoration of health—it is only the crisis of convalescence." Much remains to be done before the last traces of my deadly malady are expelled, and before my whole being tingles with joyous vitality and power. Therefore it is that I must look to myself.

This is an inward look. Formerly, when first I knew the Lord, my gaze was sent outward, to the work of God the Son. I saw Him lifted up to die. I heard His victorious *It is finished*. I went on my way with a merry heart. But now, while Jesus never is to be neglected, my gaze is turned within, to the work of God the Spirit, and to the renewed nature which He bestows on me. I am to

ask whether this nature prospers and advances from strength to strength ; whether the blessed Spirit has abundant room and uninterrupted scope to carry forward His labours ; whether I may not be grieving Him by my carelessness and evil ; whether, as Faber sings, " of lowly thoughts and simple ways I build a nest for Him." Day by day I must put my unstable and ineffectual life into His mighty hands. Day by day I must look to see that He controls me altogether.

This look has great issues. It results in *a full reward.* Not that there is room for personal merit of my own in connection with my final deliverance from sin and death ; for God's grace is first and last and without end. And yet I shall be judged according as my work shall be ; in agreement with the honour I have conferred on the Lord the Spirit, the degree in which I have benefited from His presence, the high and sacred uses I have made of Him. Here, there are for the disciple who reverences Him the triumph over temptation, the nearer communion with God, and the healing virtue which renews and refreshes many. And hereafter, the indolent Christian cannot have so shining a diadem, and so lofty a place, as the Christian to whom the Holy Ghost has been meat and drink and sun and rain and native air. He will not dwell so close to the heavenly Throne, nor enjoy so much of the presence of the Lord.

As I would not miss, either then or now, God's full reward, let me look always to myself.

June 17.

I STOOP AND DRINK AND LIVE.

"And David longed and said, O that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate!"
—1 CHRON. xi. 17.

OTHER wells there are, besides that at the Bethlehem gate which had such tender associations for David; and of their cooling waters I should drink in my battle.

One of them I shall find in the Word of God. That hero in Christ's sacramental host, James Gilmour of Mongolia, writes in a letter: "Sometimes it is dark; but I just hold on, and it is all right. Romans is good reading in dull spiritual weather. And when I cannot make headway, I open in the Psalms, and let myself be carried along in the stream of devotion which flows through the whole book." It is a quickening example for me, who ought to extract from my Bible a wealth of which, I fear, I have little conception and less actual experience. Let mine be the honest dealing which applies the message to my conscience and life. Let mine be the adoring heart which never forgets that the very God is moving and speaking in the matchless Book.

Another well I shall find in the House of God. After I have been careful and troubled through the busy week, I discover the waters of quietness in the Sabbath worship of the church. Its prayers, its psalms of praise, its meditation on the truth, its communion with the saints and with their Lord: how they

assist me to live in the world as a pilgrim of eternity! Lessons taught me in the holy place rise up in my mind, to deter me from wrong, and to counsel me to follow the King. Years after, they will recur, in whispers that warn or guide or console. I must be sure that from my heart of hearts I can say, *Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy House*, and in this lower world I must anticipate the yet statelier Church of the heavenly country.

Best of all wells I shall find in the Christ of God. He is divine, and therefore abundantly able to cope with and overcome my desperate necessity. He is human, and therefore near to me, and interested in me, and eager for my welfare. He is Prophet, to teach me in my ignorance by His Gospel and His enlightening Spirit. He is Priest, Who has offered Himself a sacrifice for my sin, and Who intercedes on my behalf before His Father's face. He is King, with a power which can subdue my worst enemies. Good Physician He is, and Good Shepherd; the Lord my Righteousness, and the Lord my Strength, and the Lord my Peace; the Life and the Light. Inexhaustible fountains are in Him; let me, as Rutherfurd did, "sing and drink, and drink and sing."

I am glad that I do not require to break through a troop of opposing enemies to reach these wells of God. Their waters are nigh me, waiting for my approach and appropriation. The only Philistines I need fear are within and not without. It is my impoverishment and my crime that I do not love the fountains more.

June 18.

YOU SEEM SO NEAR, SO FAR AWAY.

"*And also much cattle.*"—JONAH iv. 11.

I CANNOT but feel that the animals suffer through my sin. *The whole creation*, says St. Paul, *groaneth and travaileth in pain.* No doubt, conflict and death were in the world before man's first disobedience; and geology gives me glimpses of "dragons of the prime that tare each other in their slime." Yet, since I wandered rebelliously from my Father, a new suspiciousness has entered beast and bird, a new dread and dislike of their human companion, a new trouble unfelt in the peacefulness of Eden. Is there not in the mournful breach a reason why I should think and act tenderly towards every living creature? Already I have so marred and afflicted the world, that I ought not to add to its cup of bitterness one drop more of anguish.

If I love all things both great and small, I am in good company. I remember Columba of Iona, and how the old white horse was so knit with him in fellowship, that it discerned the approach of his death before Diarmit and Baithene understood their impending grief; and Francis of Assisi, and how he tamed the wolf and preached to the twittering swallows; and John Woolman out on the Atlantic, and how he "observed the dull appearance of the fowls at sea, and the pining sickness of some of them, and often recalled the Fountain of Goodness Who gave being to

them all." I think of Robert Herrick, lamenting the loss of his spaniel Tracie with "one teare" though the lowly friend "deserved a million"; of Matthew Arnold, singing the elegy of the dachshund Geist, with his temper of heroic mould, his liquid melancholy eye, and all his life and all his love crowded into four short years; of Dr. John Brown, celebrating the loyalty and affection of Rab. A man should wish to surround himself with the wisest and gentlest associates; and it will dignify me to move in so gracious a society.

But I have my best exemplar in God. He had pity on Nineveh, that great city, not only because of its sixscore thousand little children but because of its *much cattle*. Why should He overwhelm herd and flock in destruction? Why should He punish innocent beasts with the ruin merited by sinful men? Not a sparrow, His dear Son said, falls to the ground without His knowledge. His heart has room for dumb animals; the young lions seek their meat from Him; He hides His face, and the creatures are troubled. Let me share His likeness, not in the graver matters of the soul merely, but in my behaviour towards these brothers and sisters of mine, so near me and so far away. Let my life be so kindly and so holy, that the inhabitants of field and wood will rejoice in its radiance. By and by a little child will lead wolf and leopard and kid and lamb; to-day and now I would be that child in the family of God. May He mould me into a Jonah, a Dove, more dove-like than the angry prophet.

June 19.

LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK.

"*In your patience ye shall win your souls.*" LUKE xxi. 19 (R.V.).

WHAT a virtue is Christian endurance and steadfastness—"Faith's patience imperturbable in Thee, Hope's patience till the long-drawn shadows flee, Love's patience unresentful of all scathe"! I desire to have its robustness and its quiet continuance breathed into my easily shaken life.

Over hindrances and hostile circumstances patience will enable me to rise a victor. Obstacles block my path. Temptations lie in wait for my approach. Opposition dogs my Christianity, precisely in proportion to its reality and its depth. But should I not see in these things so many incentives to diligence and prayer? Because they are round me and within me, should I not sit, like Botticelli's statue of Fortitude which Mr. Ruskin describes, with my hand always on the sword-hilt, ready to grasp my weapon firmly the instant the far-off trumpet blows?

Over men who provoke and persecute, who ridicule and discourage, patience will cleanse and strengthen me to gain a constant triumph. Job, in the end of his sorrowful discipline, prayed for his sharp-tongued friends. Stephen "heeded not reviling tones," but looked upward full of grace, and pleaded, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* Jesus

made the Cross of His ignominy and rejection an oratory of intercession for His murderers. These are my patterns, and to such white and rosy Alps I am to climb. Let me overcome evil with good. Let me heap coals of fire on my adversary's head.

Over the delays and apparent repulses I receive from God, keenest of all my trials, patience will make me more than a conqueror. I see a wrestler in the grey dawn, who refuses to let the Angel go without the Angel's benediction. I see one who pants and cries, until his *throat is dry* with his entreaties. I see a mournful and skilful mother who catches and entangles Christ in His own words. I see Christ Himself, under the olives in the moonlight, beseeching again and again, *If it be possible! If it be possible!* Their humility, their trust, their perseverance, their zeal, are to be mine.

Patience is the grace of the athlete, who lays aside every weight and the sin which closely clings to him. It is the grace of the soldier, who goes on fighting the good fight although the campaign is protracted, and the antagonists as numerous as autumnal leaves in Vallombrosa. It is the grace of the worker, who stays in the vineyard till his Lord calls him home, even if the soil is hard to till, and the clusters of purple and amber grapes are exceedingly few. It is the grace of the suppliant, who has power with God and prevails.

Grant me, O Lord, that patience and that faith. They who wait after this fashion renew their strength; they mount up with wings as eagles, they run and are not weary, they walk and do not faint.

June 20.

BEHIND THE FROWN A SMILE.

"*And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly with them.*" —GEN. xlii. 7.

THERE may be an unreckonable love hiding itself behind a rough exterior and an untender aspect. All the while that Joseph made himself strange to his brethren, what ruth was in his breast! and how he cherished no thought regarding them but a thought of peace!

So it is sometimes in the human relationship. For a time the father must look gravely on the child who has disobeyed, and must speak with seriousness and severity; but, underneath the surface of storm, his very soul throbs for the wrong-doer, and his heart will break while his lips utter the words that upbraid and condemn. Now and then, the friend, if he is to be true to the ideals of friendship, must reprove his chosen comrade rather than suffer sin upon him; but is there any cooling of his affection, or any lessening of his ardour? It is not easy, in the loves of the home and the alliances of companionship and amity, to frown at all. Occasionally I must do it, if I am to keep uninjured my allegiance to my heavenly Lord. But I pray that I may never do it except with a spirit which weeps and bleeds.

So it often is in the providence of God. Does He not lead me through dark rooms, and along stony paths, and up steep hillsides, and down

into the waters which are " to the palate bitter "? Perhaps I lose my substance, and there is a hard struggle now for the simple necessaries of existence. Perhaps I part with health, and the four walls of my sick-chamber are the boundaries of my little world. Perhaps one who is dear to me as life itself lies newly dead. But God cares for me none the less, but all the more. From the external treasure, and the activities in which I delighted, and the helpful and fruitful friendship, He lifts me up and away to the secret of His presence and the experience of His special grace. And my loss turns out to be my gain.

And so it is frequently in the soul's history. There is conviction of sin, before there is assurance of pardon. There are tears through the long night, before joy arrives with the day-dawn. There is the deepening in me of the sense of guilt, before my Saviour lifts the burden and throws open His house of wine. Afterwards, too, the trouble may be repeated. Like John Newton, I ask the Lord that I may grow in faith and love and every grace ; and for reply He makes me " feel the hidden evils of my heart," and " bids the angry powers of hell assault my soul in every part." Yes, but both in the beginning of my life and in the later time, He is employing the best plan to perfect that which concerneth me. Behind the heavy cloud His sun shines.

If He and I are not two spirits but one, let me never doubt Him even when I understand Him least.

June 21.

ALL POSSIBLE ADVANTAGE.

"*Wherefore, girding up the loins of your mind, be sober, and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"—1 PET. i. 13 (R.V.).

"IN all siege operations," says Lord Wolseley in his *Soldier's Pocket Handbook*, "it is most important that the Staff and Royal Engineer officers should study the almanack well, and keep before them the hours of sunset and sunrise, and of the moon's rising and setting, so that all possible advantage may be reaped of every hour of darkness."

At present, in comparison with the morning awaiting me, it is my hour of darkness. Yet I, too, should study the almanack well. I, too, should take every possible advantage.

I must be sober and wakeful, because the siege operations to which I am called are the most arduous conceivable. I am bidden drive out the usurpers that still are too strongly entrenched within my own soul—old sins which haunt its secret corners, listlessness and indolence that are loth to go, the forgetfulness of my Lord and the pride in myself which are sure precursors of catastrophe. I am commanded, moreover, to expel the evil principalities and powers that have their fortresses in the world around me, to see no wrong which I do not resist, to come to the help of my Master against the mighty, to reclaim for Him His alienated territory. Had any army ever such a task?

I must be sober and alert, because my adversaries do not sleep. Hostile angels and their king, *spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*, watch for my stumbling. A society that has no liking for single-hearted and decisive Christianity envelopes me like a down-dragging and poisonous atmosphere. In my own nature are many incitements to unholiness. These enemies choose well their moment of attack, and if they find me careless and undevout, how calamitously they ride rough-shod over me! At once the patient work of years may be undone. When victory seems well within my grasp, I may be put to utter shame and beaten back in headlong rout.

I must be sober and vigilant, because at an hour I think not my Lord will return. I look forward to *the grace*, supernal, excelling, *that is to be brought to me at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. He will terminate the tedious siege. He will crown His soldiers with glory and honour. But what a sadness mine will be, and what a reproach, if at His appearing He should find me negligent! What a grief to my soul and to His soul, if He has to mingle words of disappointment with the words that invite me to His rest and joy! I would not be *saved so as by fire*, or come to land *on a broken piece of the ship*. I would enter the palace with "mirth on every side."

Till the moon sets and the sun rises, till night is past and lo! it is day, I must maintain my vigil.

June 22.

EARTH'S CRAMMED WITH HEAVEN.

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all."—Ps. civ. 24.

LET me walk through the world, so various, so beautiful, so new, with an open eye. It is strange that there are many who have no discernment of its wondrousness. They are dwellers in a palace, which has a variety and a magnificence that Nero's Golden House on the Palatine and Boabdil's Alhambra in Granada never possessed; and they are blind to its marvels. But I would ask a vision purged and illuminated; and then nature will benefit spirit, and I shall resemble her whom Wordsworth portrays:

> The stars of midnight shall be dear
> To her; and she shall lean her ear
> In many a secret place
> Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
> And beauty born of murmuring sound
> Shall pass into her face.

Let me walk through the world, which is the many-coloured vesture of the Lord, with a believing mind. Curious it is, and sad, that men should be sceptical in a universe that carries the print of the Creator's finger on each grain of sand, each blade of grass, each beam of light. Are they not as senseless as one who should go through a factory, with its looms and wheels, and should say, "I do not believe in man"? But I would be wiser than they. I would subscribe to

William Law's confession of faith, "Nature is what it is for this only end, that the hidden riches, the invisible powers, blessings, glory, and love of the unsearchable God may become visible, sensible, and manifest in it and by it." That is a saner conclusion than the agnostic's.

And let me walk through the world with a joyous soul. No doubt, there is much in it to fill the heart with painfulness; and pessimism has turned to the strifes and sorrows of creation for proof of its dismal creed. But the goodness of God is written, too, in letters of gold on hill and loch and forest and stream. Not a sunrise but speaks of His patient and enduring grace. Not a sunset but fires young hearts with great ambitions, and comforts the old with hope, and stirs the conscience of the sinner, and opens heaven itself to the saint. So much of divinest benediction the Maker and the Friend of man conveys by His sunrise and sunset touches, by flower-bells and woodland trees, by the round ocean and the living air and the blue sky. Wherefore let me be strong and of a good courage: He remembers me in love.

Preachers and trumpets of the unseen world the sights and sounds of the landscape ought to be. And still, in the cool of the day, when I pass through the country fields, or climb to the summit of the hill, or sit and gaze across the sea, God and my soul should meet and talk. For his universe, as Dr. Illingworth writes, is "no mere machine, or book, or picture, but a perpetually sounding Voice."

June 23.

SPIRIT AND LIFE.

"Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."—JOHN vi. 68.

THOU hast the words of eternal life, impulsive and warm-hearted Peter said. And there never was a truer confession.

The words of Jesus are simple words. There is no ambiguity about them, no vague mistiness, no dark secrecy which baffles my enquiry and search. If they have their unfathomed depths, where giants must swim, they have their limpid and easy shallows, where the feet of the little children may wade. The message of salvation enters in at lowly doors, and is level to my understanding. Human science bewilders me by the immensity of its calculations, its spaces and distances and years upon years. Human philosophy sends its line down to profundities where I cannot follow. But Christ is near me, and approachable, and One Whom I can grasp and make my own.

The words of Jesus are picturesque and memorable words. He clothes His truth in picture, parable, story. He prefers the concrete to the abstract. He appeals to my imagination as well as to my reason. There is nothing dry, or harsh, or crabbed about His Evangel; it is glad good news. "Tell me that again!" Kajarnak the Eskimo said to John Beck, when for the first time he had listened to the matchless tale. And "Tell me that again!" I say,

although from my infancy the tale has been familiar to me as household words, and the features of my friends, and the daily bread. How can I weary of a Teacher, Whose message to mind and conscience and will is robed and adorned in a dress of many colours?

The words of Jesus are authoritative words. He speaks that which He knows; He testifies that which He has seen. I feel, as I hearken, that He brings me a clear and indubitable revelation about God, about myself, about sin, about redemption. I take my stand on His Gospel, and the ground is firm. Men's thoughts and dogmas are often no more than theories, speculations, hypotheses, guesses at truth. They do not give me the impression of finality. If I take refuge in them to-day, who knows but I may be driven from my house and shelter to-morrow? But Christ prefaces His assurances with a *Verily! Verily!* Here are no shadows and simulacra, visions and dreams. Here I touch, and handle, and attain.

The words of Jesus are loving words. He is not a cold moralist, or a statuesque and icy Pharisee. He stoops to me. He suffers for me. He saves me. He abides with me through time and through eternity. And I have the certitude of all this, and of much more than this, in what He says to me, graciously, alluringly, constrainingly. He draws me, and what can I do but follow on? He invites me, and surely I shall respond, *Thine am I, and on Thy side.* He wins thought and heart, until mine is Simon Peter's instinctive and irrevocable surrender, *Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*

June 24.

MORE AND MORE.

"Thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water."—JUDG. i. 15.

ALSO: the word of Achsah, Caleb's daughter, is the commonest of words in the hungering and thirsting heart and on the praying lips of the Christian. God has done much for me. He has given me a south land, where the sun shines, where the fields are broad and rich, where vine and olive and fig may flourish and yield their harvests. But I am not yet at the end of His resources or of my needs. He must give me also springs of water to quicken and revive everything. I have not attained. I am not fully satisfied. And, liberal as He has been, He has not wearied bestowing, nor is His treasury depleted. Back and back to Him I shall come, with new entreaties and new hopes. Back and back to me He will return, with new largess and new love. *Also:* it is both my word and His.

Suppose that I am forgiven, I would have Him add to His forgiveness the peace and assurance which it should beget. Suppose that I am justified in His sight by the infinite meritoriousness of my Lord Jesus Christ, I would know now what it is to be sanctified by the infinite patience and power of the Holy Ghost. Suppose that I am His child, dwelling in the home and atmosphere of His favour, I would at the same time be His consecrated servant and commissioned ambassador, employed to

advance His Kingdom. Suppose that He has given me the south land of His mercifulness and grace, He must give me also the springs of water, that though the whole of the circling year I may bear much fruit to His glory. Neither His anticipations nor mine are as yet completely realised.

I remember Sarah Pierrepont. From her childhood God blessed her. "They say there is a young lady in New Haven, who is beloved of that Great Being Who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this Great Being comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight." A few years later, the girl of thirteen was the wife of Jonathan Edwards. And in the Awakening of 1740 she received her *Also*. Then the Great Being became closer than breathing. "God and Christ," she wrote, "were so present and so near that I seemed removed from myself." And her husband, the severest judge of all ecstasies, knew that she followed no impulsive and evanescent impressions. "Now, if such things," he exclaimed, "are enthusiasm and the fruits of a distempered brain, let my brain be evermore possessed of that happy distemper! If it be distraction, I pray God that the world of mankind may be seized with this benign, meek, beneficent, beatifical, glorious distraction."

Let Him give me *also* springs of water. Let Him send me the experience of Sarah Pierrepont's happy distemper and glorious distraction. Let Him add good to good and crown to crown.

June 25.

HIS BANNER OVER ME IS LOVE.

"*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it.*"—MATT. xxvi. 26.

THE Holy Supper should mean very much to my soul.

As, for instance, it ought to be the keepsake of my Lord. The poet tells how he bent over young Evelyn Hope, formed of spirit and fire and dew—Evelyn Hope, whom God had beckoned, and she was dead. He said, "I give you this leaf to keep; see, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand." "You will wake," he whispered softly, "and remember, and understand." So my Saviour gives me this feast to keep. "You remember," He says, "you understand." In the week-days, with their work and worry, a hundred interlopers hide my dying and undying Friend from me. But when the fair white cloth is spread, I see once more the Lord Who is all my Boast: Him I see, and none beside.

And it ought to be the bulwark of my belief. As often as I eat this bread and drink this cup, I do preach the Lord's death—the death so solitary and so shameful and so saving, vicarious and victorious, my ransom and my refuge and my rest. I publish to men and angels the truth that the Cross of Jesus Christ is the centre and core of my religion. I show the great red light of Calvary, and the shining lamp of the Holy Sepulchre of Him Who was delivered for my offences and raised again for

my justification. "None other Lamb," I protest, "none other Name."

And it ought to be the nourishment of my life. Does not the feast, when I sit at it with humble and thankful heart, bring me as close to Christ as I can be on the earthward side of His glory? I behold the blessed body bruised and broken. I look into the fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins. He is put in His fulness into my embrace. He rekindles my dwindling faith and my decaying regard. It is as if my Melchizedek, King of righteousness and King of peace, came out from His Salem, with bread and wine for His soldier, worn with war and weary from the long and toilsome march. I eat and drink, and I lift up my head.

And it ought to be the foretaste and prelibation of my heaven. One day, I shall witness and enjoy the very Bread of Life in the house not made with hands. One day, I shall drink a better wine at the marriage supper of the King's Son. Should I not be glad to have meantime the prophecy and pledge of the banqueting hall from which I shall go no more out? A haze dims and blurs my expectancy too often. Clouds shut the immortal land from my view. And therefore I thank God for the feast that predicts those things He is preparing for them who love Him.

Now, may I not only eat the bread with the Lord, but eat the Lord with the bread. Judas did the first. Peter and John and Thomas and Nathanael did the second. And I would be ranked not among false disciples but among true.

June 26.

THERE LIVES NO GREATER LEADER.

"Thou shalt in any case set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose."—DEUT. xvii. 15.

I LOOK into this old Mirror for Magistrates, and I catch the dim outlines of a Figure that is august and royal indeed.

My kingliest King has been chosen for me by the Lord my God. Christ, I read, did not glorify Himself to be made a High Priest; no, nor yet a Monarch and Sovereign. By the appointment of His Father, He comes to fight my battles, to rout my enemies, and to secure my present and eternal franchisement. It seems to render my salvation doubly sure, and doubly precious, that both the Father and the Son are eager for it and active in it. The Persons of the Godhead are ever in harmony; but never is their agreement more complete than when they deliver and befriend my soul.

My divine King is not a foreigner but my true Brother. He wears my nature. He carries my sicknesses. He is made in the likeness of my sinful flesh, even if no slightest taint adheres to Him. The prince Buddha left his father's court to share the lot of the poor and miserable; but his condescension, beautiful as it is, is small in comparison with Christ's. How I thank Him for it! He never could have saved me, or gained my trust, or elicited and kept my loyal obedience, if He had been content to rule me from a distance. He must enter my life and understand my case.

My noblest and stateliest King does not multiply horses to Himself, or cause the people to return to Egypt. He has no need of instruments of war, and of leagues and treaties with the proud empires of the world. A superhuman strength, a holy and heavenly might, are His. He became my Brother, it is true; but to-day, while He keeps my humanity on His Throne, He has resumed the boundless and endless omnipotences of God. There is no desperate necessity of mine with which He cannot grapple. There are no enemies that will blanch His cheek or put the powers of His arm to shame.

My King of glory and of grace does not turn aside from the commandment, to the right hand or to the left. So far from disobeying its smallest precept, He magnifies the law of God, and invests it with honours which it never had before. He bends down to reverence and fulfil those healthful and blessed statutes which I have forgotten. Ay, and for love of God and me, He bears His Cross without the camp, and endures the malefactor's doom. The holy, holy, holy Lord, Whose eyes are a flame of fire, is well pleased with Him for His righteousness' sake, and well pleased with me who have no other hope than Him.

Is not Jesus better than the Arthur of whom Lancelot said, "I never saw his like; there lives no greater leader"? At His feet I humbly bow. I swear my oath of allegiance. I set Him King over me Whom the Lord my God has chosen.

June 27.

LOVE OF LOVE.

"*And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.*"—Col. iii. 14 (R.V.).

THE highest, deepest, most fruitful and most enriching love, the *charity which is the bond of perfectness*, is found only within the household of the saints. It is a flower whose crimson blossoms beautify Christ's garden alone. Outside the garden, I know, and I thank God for it, there is an abundance of sympathy and kindliness and help. Courtesy and consideration and generosity and graciousness thrive in many hearts, and adorn many lives, which own no allegiance to Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Sometimes, indeed, the gentleness and the brotherliness of the citizens of the world put me to the blush. They are more conquering and more persevering than my own.

Yet the love of a disciple has a supremacy easily recognisable and not to be disputed.

To begin with, it follows the consummate Example. When the Parthenon was built in Athens, it is said that the meanest hut in the narrowest street in the city of the Violet Crown was designed after the splendid temple which gleamed in marble and gold. And if I am Christ's, I plant my foot where He has left the print of His shoe, I kindle my little torch at His glowing altar, I pray that my love for the shepherdless sheep may be conformed to His greater love. Moreover, this is a charity which

is endowed with a penetrating and discriminating vision. It sees the sorest griefs of men and women, those which rise out of their sins and which expose them to God's displeasure and frown. And it never can be content till it has done its uttermost to heal those fatal griefs. Bodily sickness, poverty, perplexity and doubt, bereavement and loss, are mournful enough, and it has its succour for each of them. But it pierces beyond these, and beneath these, to that which is incalculably sadder and worse. And then, also, it is a love which supplicates and obtains for bankrupt hearts the *summum bonum*, the good which is transcendent and everlasting. It takes them by the hand and leads them home to God. It prays, and works, and weeps, and entreats, and leaves no method untried, in order that they may taste and keep His pardon, His favour, His holiness, His fellowship, His heaven. Not that which is great but that which is greatest, not that which is much to be desired but that which is most to be desired, it covets and receives for the children who are far from home.

This is the charity which changes the heart of stone into the heart of flesh, and which brings the life that had sundered itself from God into happy communion with Him. This is the charity which renews the hard and evil world. This is the charity which is prelude and promise of the land "whose citizens are lovely and whose King is Very Love." I will kneel and ask that, this morning and every morning, it may be the charity which I put on afresh.

June 28.

IS THERE EVIL IN THE CITY ?

"*Nineveh hath been from of old like a pool of water ; yet they flee away. Stand, stand ! they cry ; but none looketh back.*"—NAH. ii. 8 (R.V.).

NAHUM'S prophecy is the doom of a city haughty and overbearing and oppressive. But it is not merely with ancient Nineveh, it is with the cities and communities of to-day, that the God of righteousness and truth concerns Himself.

So let me be filled with solicitude for my native land. Much in it stirs my pride, and awakens my joy, and draws tears of gratitude from my eyes. I am glad to belong to "this royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle, this happy breed of men, this little world, this precious stone set in the silver sea, this England." Mine is the very queen of commonwealths. But if I have God's mind, I see in my beloved country much to beget shame and penitence. The greed of gain ; the excessive self-reliance which sends the nation swaggering boastfully down the High Street of the world ; the neglect of God's Book and God's Day and God's House ; the failure to enquire in public affairs after the wish and the command of Christ ; the forgetfulness of the Lord's benefits in the past and His forbearance and goodness in the present ; the open sins which inflict so dark a stain : these things must make me blush, and should send me to my knees in confession and prayer. May the mercy of Heaven preserve my land from

the destruction that swept proud Nineveh away! May the power of Heaven purify its social and political and commercial life, so that it may be freed from the unbelief and the evil which poisoned Nineveh's influence and sapped all her strength!

And let me rouse myself to resolute endeavour for my country's safeguarding and cleansing and spiritual growth. Anxiety is not enough. Prayer is not enough. If my patriotism is true, I shall work, and I shall fight, till the dark places are cleared, till civic wrong and national iniquity and practical atheism are dead, till Christ is King. "He best serves the State," Epictetus said many centuries ago, "who raises not the roofs of its houses but the souls of its citizens." "Public life," Edmund Burke declared, "is a situation of power and energy; he trespasses upon his duty who sleeps upon his watch as well as he that goes over to the enemy." "That which put Glory of Grace into all that he did," wrote Bunyan of one of his heroes, "was that he did it out of pure love to his country." I am too selfishly indolent, too perversely fastidious, too content with the pose of the critic, too unmanly, too detached. I "loiter out my days without blame and without use." But my sword ought not to sleep. My voice ought not to be silent. I should spare no pains to uplift my fellows. Like Beowulf, I should attack and slay the Grendel with the handgrip of a man.

Thus I shall aid in turning away Nineveh's doom from my fatherland. Thus, instead of fleeing in feebleness and rout, my country will stand fast in the might of the Lord.

June 29.

THE HUMILITY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

"He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you."—JOHN xvi. 14.

THE Spirit of God, Who is God the Spirit, is marvellously and continually humble. He does not speak of Himself. It is all His effort and all His delight to bear testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is not Christ the Lesson-book which He expounds to me? His Person: how in the one Mediator and Redeemer of lost souls God and man meet together, so that He is invested with unprecedented wisdom and strength and tenderness and sympathy, and is able to save to the uttermost. His Work: how He left behind Him the heavenly city, and became incarnate in Bethlehem; how He "wrought with human hands the creed of creeds in loveliness of perfect deeds"; how He never halted in His progress until He arrived at the place somewhat ascending where stands a Cross. His Glory: how death and the sepulchre could not detain Him; and how He reigns to-day, and will judge the world to-morrow. These are the favourite themes of the teaching Spirit.

And is not Christ the Magnet towards which He attracts and allures me? For He is far from satisfied when He has enlightened my mind in the knowledge of the Saviour. He understands how barren and passionless and cold intellectual illumination too frequently is; and He is eager to translate theory into faith, and speculation

into surrender. So it is He Who persuades and enables me to embrace Jesus, expounded to me and offered to me in the Gospel. Until this vital and unbreakable union is cemented between myself in my blindness and nakedness and restlessness, and the Good Physician in His overflowing fulness of supply, the Holy Ghost is hungry still. To the lodestone of Christ's illimitable grace the regenerating Spirit draws me on.

And is not Christ the Watchword and Battle-cry which He sets on my lips? Martin Luther is touched and energised by the Holy Ghost, and immediately he preaches the good news that sinful men are justified by simple faith in Jesus. William Carey is a learner in the same school, and soon he sails for India, because Christ has other sheep whom he must entice to the fold. Thomas Chalmers is convinced by the Spirit of the worthlessness of his own righteous deeds, and thenceforward he is spokesman of the religion in which I am nothing and Jesus Christ is All. The Holy Ghost urges me forth, that I may plead with men on my Shepherd's and my Master's behalf. "None but Christ!" the quickening and missionary Spirit bids me cry.

God the Holy Ghost lifts Jesus high on the lampstand, that in the Saviour's light rather than in His own multitudes may rejoice. And I trust that this is the one Light which illumines and purifies and gladdens and fertilises my soul.

June 30.

NO MOTIVE RIVALS THIS.

"As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand."—1 KINGS xvii. 1.

EVERY day I am standing before some one. Perhaps it is myself. I am an Epicurean, and I desire my own happiness and pleasure. Or I am a Stoic, and it is my own conscience of duty and right which I must appease. Or I am an Aristotelian, and I crave for my mind an orderly and balanced and well-arranged learning and knowledge. Or I am a Platonist, and some great ideal has thrown its glamour over me, and I feel that I cannot be content until I grasp it with both my hands. But always it is myself in some shape and form, lower or higher, that dominates me and urges me forward. And self is not the best master.

Perhaps it is my world. Popularity and the good opinion of others are my choicest possessions and the influences which sway me most. I will say and do nothing to offend those in the midst of whom my days are spent. Even my strong and deep convictions, if I have any, must be whispered with bated breath, or must be altogether stifled, if they are likely to clash with the maxims and conventions of the crowd. I had rather disobey God than displease society. I had rather follow the multitude than be in the right with two or three. It is a low and poor tribunal.

Perhaps it is my friend. In my home is a mother or a wife, whose "Well done!" is my

chiefest prize. Knit to me by the subtlest and strongest bonds is a comrade, whose approval is better than gold. Augustine had his dear and intimate friends, Alypius and Nebridius; and for many a year nothing was sweeter to them than "to talk and laugh together, to do kind offices by turns, to read together pleasant books, to jest and to be earnest alternately, to dissent without ill-will, sometimes to teach and sometimes to learn, to long for one another when absent and to welcome the freshcomer with joy." But my friend's applause is not the supreme test.

Nay, it ought to be my God. God *before Whom I stand*, said Elijah. *God Whose I am and Whom I serve*, said St. Paul. In every action of my life—ay, and in every conscious and voluntary thought of my heart—I should remember His holiness, and I should seek His glory. What a dignity the constant sight of Him would impart to my history!—I could not stoop to anything questionable; I could not sully myself with anything dishonourable and evil. What a strength the recollection of Him would infuse into my soul!—Sarcasm and ridicule, hatred and abuse, will matter nothing at all, if I am sure of the sunshine of His commendation. What a peace His gracious favour begets! This certainly is the motive of motives.

Let me think, resolve, speak, act, in the presence of the living Lord. Let me acquaint myself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto me.

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